DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 300 937 EC 211 081

AUTHOR Stainback, Susan; Stainback, William
TITLE Understanding & Conducting Qualitative Research.
INSTITUTION Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Va.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-8403-5020-1
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 125p.
AVAILABLE FROM Council for Exceptional Children, Publication Sales, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA ($19.50; $15.60 members, Publication No. 329).
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Data Analysis; Data Collection; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethics; *Ethnography; Field Studies; Generalization; Holistic Approach; *Observation; Preschool Education; Program Validation; *Qualitative Research; Reliability; *Research Design; *Research Methodology; Research Reports; Special Education; Technical Writing

ABSTRACT

In this book, which applies the state of the art in qualitative research to special education, qualitative research is used as a generic term for investigative methodologies described variously as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field research, or participant-observer research. Chapter 1 introduces and defines qualitative research and explains how it differs from quantitative research. Chapter 2 discusses the characteristics of qualitative research and its utility in providing a holistic description of educational programs and their social validity. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 cover methodological considerations involved in designing, conducting, and reporting qualitative research. Specific points covered include: the pre-fieldwork stage, site and participant selection, researcher role, data collection, recording methods, data organization and analysis, corroboration, contents of a written report, report organization, report writing, and report dissemination. The validity, reliability, and generalizability of research findings from a qualitative theoretical orientation are discussed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 provides guidelines for responsible use of qualitative methodology, by such means as avoiding misuse, avoiding undue claims, and considering ethical issues. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED300937

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

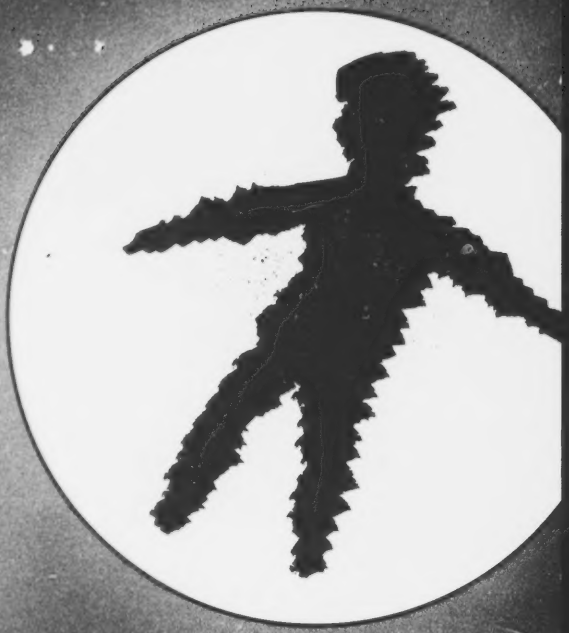
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C.E.C.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

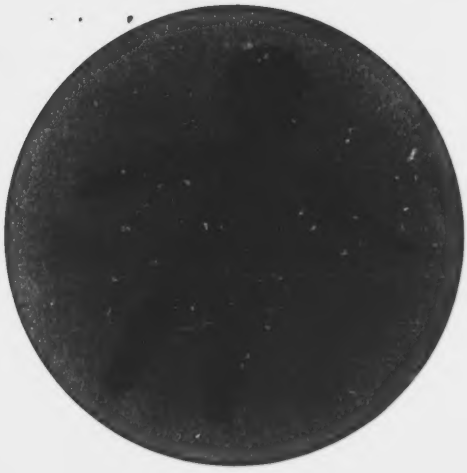


Understanding & Conducting Qualitative Research

Susan Stainback
William Stainback

EC 211081

2



Understanding & Conducting Qualitative Research

Susan Stainback
William Stainback

The Council for Exceptional Children

Kendall/Hunt
Publishing Company
Dubuque, Iowa

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stainback, Susan Bray.
Understanding and conducting qualitative research / Susan Stainback, William Stainback.
p. cm.
Bibliography: p.
ISBN 0-8403-5020-1
1. Social sciences—Statistical methods. 2. Social sciences—Methodology. I. Stainback, William C. II. Title.
HA29.S774 1988
300'.72—dc19 88-20306
CIP

Developed by The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091-1589.

Copyright © 1988 by The Council for Exceptional Children.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 88-20306

ISBN 0-8403-5020-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

About the Authors v

Preface vii

1. Introduction to Qualitative Research 1

2. Utility and Characteristics of Qualitative Research 11

3. Structuring a Qualitative Research Study 25

4. Conducting a Qualitative Research Study 47

5. Reporting Qualitative Research Findings 77

6. Credibility of Qualitative Research Findings 97

7. Using Qualitative Research Responsibly 105

References 115

About the Authors

Susan and **William Stainback** both received their doctorates in education from the University of Virginia. They have been classroom teachers and are currently professors at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls. They have published extensively in professional and scientific journals. Their current interests are in qualitative research and the education of all students in the mainstream of regular education. The Stainbacks were recently selected to fill the Matthew J. Guglielmo Endowed Chair for distinguished scholars at California State University, Los Angeles.

Preface

During the 1980s, there has been growing interest in the potential contributions qualitative research could make to scientific/scholarly inquiry in general education (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). This interest has begun to spill over into special education (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). As noted by Rist (1980), what was a quiet and perhaps peripheral aspect of educational research has been moving rapidly toward center stage in recent years. However, the methodology of the qualitative approach remains elusive and unknown to most researchers.

In this book, we draw together and attempt to clarify the state of the art in qualitative research. Critical decisions that must be made when conducting this type of research are also discussed. The purpose is to provide additional attention to and understanding of qualitative research and to stimulate more widespread use of this methodology by those who work in special education.

The book is targeted toward graduate students and practicing professionals with advanced degrees. Methodological procedures for conducting and reporting qualitative research are included. In addition, guidelines for structuring, conducting, and reporting qualitative research are provided along with specific illustrations and examples.

The book has seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces and defines qualitative research. The utility and characteristics of qualitative research are discussed in Chapter 2. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 cover methodological considerations involved in designing, conducting and reporting qualitative research. The validity, reliability, and generalizability of research findings from a qualitative theoretical orientation are discussed in Chapter 6. Finally, Chapter 7 covers the use of qualitative methodology in a responsible manner in educational settings.

We would like to acknowledge a number of people who were very helpful during the preparation of this text. Dr. June Jordan was instrumental in the book's publication by The Council for Exceptional Children; she has always been positive and consistent in encouraging our professional efforts. We would also like to acknowledge the anonymous reviewers of a prepublication draft who made a number of suggestions that led to significant improvements, especially in Chapters 3 and 4. We owe Marilyn Busch a debt of gratitude for typing and retyping various drafts of the book quickly and efficiently, with an ever pleasant and cheerful

attitude. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the University of Northern Iowa administration for providing us with the opportunity to pursue scholarly endeavors such as writing this book.

1 / Introduction to Qualitative Research

In this book *qualitative research* is used as a generic term for investigative methodologies described variously as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field research, or participant-observer research (Jacob, 1987, 1988). While there are a number of ways to conduct qualitative research, as described by Edgerton (1984), it calls for the investigator to enter into the lives of the persons being studied as fully and naturally as possible. It requires a long-term involvement so that the investigator's presence becomes a natural condition. The researcher listens to what people say, observes what they do, asks them questions when appropriate, and participates in their activities whenever possible. He or she also often analyzes written policies and records, program descriptions, photographs, and similar documents.

Erickson (1986) has more formally defined qualitative field research as involving (a) intensive, long-term participation in a field setting; (b) careful recording of what happens in the setting by writing field notes and interview notes and by collecting other kinds of documentary evidence (e.g., memos, school records, examples of student work, audiotapes, videotapes); (c) analytic reflection on the documentary records obtained in the field; and (d) reporting the results by means of detailed descriptions, direct quotes from interviews, and interpretative commentary. Such research involves being unusually thorough and reflective in noticing and describing everyday events in field settings and in attempting to identify the significance of the events from the various points of view of the people involved.

Since 1960, a small but growing number of researchers in special education and related disciplines have been informally and formally using qualitative research methodology. It has been the primary research methodology employed in an extensive and long-term study of the goals, values, and community adjustment of deinstitutionalized persons labeled mildly and moderately mentally retarded (Edgerton, 1967; Edgerton & Bercovici, 1976; Edgerton, Bollinger & Herr, 1984). Because of this qualitative research effort, we now have a better understanding of how persons with mental retardation

adjust to community life, what their goals and values are, and what type and how much support they need in living as normal a life as possible in community settings. Other researchers in special education and related disciplines have also begun to use qualitative research methods (Bercovici, 1983; Bogdan & Taylor, 1982; Heshusius, 1981; Levine & Langness, 1985; Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986). Thus, although qualitative research is not yet a widely used approach to research in special education, it is gaining in recognition and use.

UNDERLYING PERSPECTIVES

A number of interrelated philosophical, theoretical, and sociological perspectives underlie qualitative research methodology. The most frequently referred to is *phenomenology*. The emphasis of phenomenology is on the subjective aspects of people's behavior: the motives and beliefs behind people's actions. "The phenomenologist views human behavior, what people say and do, as a product of how people define [or interpret] their world. The task of the phenomenologist and, for us, the qualitative methodologist, is to capture this process of interpretation" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, pp. 8–9). That is, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from other people's points of view.

According to phenomenology, reality is understood only in the form in which it is perceived, and it is important to try to understand people's perceptions because their perceptions can and generally do influence their actions. While the goal of phenomenologists is to understand people's points of view or perceptions, they do not necessarily deny a reality "out there" that exists regardless of any person(s)' perception of it (Blumer, 1980; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Another closely aligned perspective focuses on the meaning given to various objects, people, situations, and events. This is referred to as *symbolic interactionism*. Meaning comes not from the thing itself but rather from the interpretation given to it by a person. "Objects, people, situations and events do not possess their own meaning; rather, meaning is conferred on them" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 33). For example, a teacher may be considered an authority figure by students, a respected community member by parents, and an employee by educational administrators. This meaning conferred on objects, people, situations, and events is influenced by both the different experiences the person has with them and by the social meaning given to them by others. People learn from others as well as from their own experiences (Blumer, 1969). Thus, to understand the behavior of a person one must understand the meaning given to the objects, people, events, and situations connected with that behavior.

In addition to phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, theories and/or concerns about *social organization* and *culture* underlie much of what qualitative researchers do. They tend to focus on how people perceive each other, arrange or organize their social relationships, and live together in communities and organized groups. They are concerned about the social: the relationships between people and how people, in their actions together, constitute environments for one another (Erickson, 1986). They are also concerned with culture, which can be defined as learned and shared standards for perceiving, behaving, and acting. As described by Spradley (1980) "culture" includes what people do and know and the things they make and use. Culture enables its members to behave in appropriate and acceptable ways in the cultural setting. For example, the culture of a rural elementary school will probably be quite different from the culture of an inner city high school.

It should be noted that most qualitative researchers do not simply study how culture and social organization influence people, but also how people create and influence various cultures. Neither the individual nor the culture can be understood in isolation. The culture influences the individual and the individual influences the culture.

Each of these interrelated perspectives, along with numerous others such as ethnomethodology, naturalism, idealism, reflexivity, hermeneutics, and linguistic philosophy, has had an influence in shaping the process of qualitative research methodology. While not all qualitative researchers hold exactly the same perspective (Jacob, 1987, 1988), most do believe that people interpret and give meaning to their experiences and to events in their environment. Thus, for qualitative researchers each person develops, through experiences and interactions with others, his or her own perception of reality. Since people's perceptions of reality are mind dependent, there are multiple views of reality. However, as previously noted, most qualitative researchers do not believe that reality is *only* what people perceive it to be. They do not necessarily deny that there is a reality "out there" beyond people's perceptions of it (Blumer, 1980). For example, the fact that qualitative researchers attempt to study people's understandings, interpretations, and perceptions of reality implies the existence of a reality to be understood, interpreted, and perceived. Further, such research implies that researchers can employ methods and procedures that permit them to investigate and report the interpretations and perceptions of others, existing beyond the researcher's own interpretations and perceptions.

Finally, while most qualitative researchers believe in the possibility of a reality beyond their own interpretations, they also believe that much of reality is created, particularly social and

cultural realities. That is, much of what is "out there" only exists because we, as a society, have conceptualized and defined it. For example, the philosophies, paradigms, theories, and research methods currently debated, discussed, and used in education are all creations of people. Thus, they exist only as long as some of us recognize and believe in them. In fact, much of what exists in the schools and in education in general is "constructed reality." As a consequence, reality is dynamic and can and does change. In addition, there seldom exists only one single reality since seldom does everyone conceptualize and define reality in the same way.

DIFFERENCES IN QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The vast majority of researchers in special education currently employ single-subject and/or group quantitative research methods. Quantitative research is based on a positivistic theoretical stance. Positivism seeks facts and causes of human behavior through the collection of objective, quantifiable data under experimentally controlled conditions. Within this perspective, the research subjects are seen as passive/reactive organisms similar to basic matter in the "hard" sciences, and the researcher is viewed as an objective scientist who manipulates the external environment and observes the effects on the subjects.

When the perspective underlying quantitative research is compared to the perspective underlying qualitative research noted in the previous section, it can be seen that qualitative research differs from quantitative research in its theoretical/philosophical rationale. Primarily as a result of differences in basic philosophical/theoretical perspectives, qualitative and quantitative research also differ in purpose, specific viewpoints, and methodological approach. The most salient differences are briefly reviewed in this section in order to help further define qualitative research. It should be noted, however, that both paradigms, while tending to stress certain research characteristics, do generally recognize, value, and attempt to enhance many of the strengths inherent in the contrasting paradigm.

Purpose

Much quantitative research is geared toward the search for causality, universal laws, and prediction and control. It is based on a "scientific" model adopted from the "hard" sciences. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is geared toward gaining an increased *understanding* of the ideas, feelings, motives, and beliefs behind

people's actions. In essence, qualitative research is oriented toward the search for meanings, that is, the interpretations and meanings people give to events, objects, other people, and situations in their environment.

Reality

Quantitative research assumes that there are social *facts* with an objective reality apart from the beliefs of individuals. Quantitative researchers focus on the facts and causes of behavior and believe that these facts do not change. There is a single, stable, verifiable reality. The emphasis is on the accumulation of facts. Qualitative research, however, assumes that reality is socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of a situation. Qualitative researchers consider the changing or dynamic nature of reality. People's perceptions of educational concerns are multiple, complex, and changing; thus, reality is *dynamic.* While qualitative researchers view past and present research findings as important, they consider such findings as bases for further study in a changing reality.

Viewpoint

Quantitative researchers attempt to study reality or "hard" facts from the *outsider's* viewpoint. That is, they maintain a detached, objective view. The rationale is to allow the researcher to investigate facts about educational matters, free from the potential biases of private intuition, which may vary from individual to individual. In contrast, qualitative researchers focus on the *insider's* viewpoint. They talk with people who have had firsthand experience with the educational activities or procedures being investigated; they might observe or participate in the activities themselves to gain firsthand experience. It is assumed that close, firsthand experience provides the most meaningful data.

Values

Quantitative researchers believe that research should be *value free* and that it can be made value free by adhering to objective, quantitative research methodology. Quantitative methodology is specifically designed to isolate and remove as many subjective elements as possible from the research situation. On the other hand, qualitative researchers stress that research is by necessity *value bound* and that this should be understood and taken into account when conducting and reporting research results. According to them, research is influenced by the values of the researcher when he or she selects the problem to be investigated, frames the questions to

be answered, chooses the measuring instruments and design of the study, and analyses and interprets the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Focus

Quantitative researchers view things in a *particularistic* manner. They tend to identify and isolate specific variables for study. They do this to structure their studies and gain control of events. Subsequently, they employ selected standardized tests, questionnaires, and/or predesigned observational instruments to collect data on the specific variables. In contrast, qualitative researchers attempt to study whatever is being investigated as a whole in order to gain a complete or *holistic* view. To achieve a holistic view, a wide array of data is needed. School documents and records, photographs, videotapes, newspaper articles, observation notes, statements made by a variety of interviewees, case histories, and even quantitative research findings are all examples of data a qualitative researcher might gather in order to gain an in-depth and complete picture of whatever is being investigated.

Orientation

Quantitative research procedures are highly structured and are most often *verification* oriented. Prior to a quantitative investigation, variables and procedures are defined and adhered to strictly, in order to verify or disprove predetermined hypotheses. Flexibility is discouraged, to guard against bias or selective support of a hypothesis. On the other hand, qualitative research procedures are flexible, exploratory, and *discovery* oriented. They allow the researcher to change or add to the types and sources of data gathered as the study progresses. The initial data collected might guide the researcher toward other relevant sources or types of data. According to qualitative researchers, this procedure aids in gaining a deeper, more valid understanding of what is being investigated than can be achieved with a more restricted approach. In general, while both quantitative and qualitative research can be used for verification or discovery, quantitative inquiry is oriented toward testing or verifying theories, ideas, and concepts, while qualitative inquiry is oriented more toward the discovery and/or exploration of ideas and concepts and the building of theory.

Data

Quantitative researchers focus on *objective* data, data existing apart from the feelings or thoughts of people and typically expressed in numerical notations. Quantitative researchers believe that facts exist outside and independent of people. In contrast, qualitative

researchers focus on *subjective* data, data existing within the minds of people and typically expressed or reported in natural language. They believe that it is essential to understand what meaning people give events in their environment.

Instrumentation

In quantitative research, *paper-and-pencil tests, preconstructed observational records, questionnaires,* and *rating scales* are most often employed to gather data. This allows for the collection of the same data in the same way from and/or about the research subjects. In contrast, in qualitative research, the *researcher* is often the primary instrument employed to gather data. According to qualitative researchers, the human person is the best instrument for grasping the meaning people give to events in their lives. One reason is that the human person is the only instrument with sufficient adaptability to encompass and adjust to the variety of realities that will be encountered when doing qualitative research in natural settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Conditions

Quantitative research data are usually collected under *controlled* conditions in order to rule out the possibility that variables other than the one being investigated could account for behavior change or a functional relationship among variables. In contrast, qualitative data are collected in a *naturalistic* manner. Programs and procedures are investigated in context as they naturally occur. This method allows for variables that naturally influence the data being collected to continue to operate without interference.

Results

While quantitative researchers certainly desire valid data, in practice they tend to focus on *reliability,* data that is consistent or stable as indicated by the researcher's ability to replicate or reproduce the findings. It is believed that "hard," replicable data is essential to the "scientific" method. Qualitative researchers, in contrast, are not as concerned about reliability. They tend to concentrate on *validity,* data that represents a true or full picture of what the researcher is investigating. According to qualitative researchers, it is imperative to gain a thorough, rich, and deep understanding of the topic under investigation.

Comparisons presented in this section constitute characterizations frequently attributed to the two paradigms. However, as noted earlier, both paradigms, while tending to stress certain research characteristics, do generally recognize, value, and attempt to

TABLE 1

Summary of Differences in Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Dimensions	Quantitative Paradigm	Qualitative Paradigm
Purpose	*Prediction and Control*—Seeks causes and effects of human behavior.	*Understanding*—Seeks to understand people's interpretations and perceptions.
Reality	*Stable*—Reality is made up of facts that do not change.	*Dynamic*—Reality changes with changes in people's perceptions.
Viewpoint	*Outsider*—Reality is what quantifiable data indicate it to be.	*Insider*—Reality is what people perceive it to be.
Values	*Value free*—Values can be controlled with appropriate methodological procedures.	*Value bound*—Values will have an impact and should be understood and taken into account when conducting and reporting research.
Focus	*Particularistic*—Selected, predefined variables are studied.	*Holistic*—A total or complete picture is sought.

Continued

enhance many of the strengths inherent in the contrasting paradigm. The differences between the research methods are summarized in Table 1.

It should be stressed that such differences in quantitative and qualitative research do not necessarily imply the superiority of one methodology compared to the other as a research strategy. Rather, these differences may make one methodology more useful than the other, depending on the research question.

CONCLUSION

While quantitative methodology has been the predominant research methodology employed in special education for most of this century,

TABLE 1 *Continued*

Summary of Differences in Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Dimensions	Quantitative Paradigm	Qualitative Paradigm
Orientation	*Verification*—Predetermined hypotheses are investigated.	*Discovery*—Theories and hypotheses are evolved from data as collected.
Data	*Objective*—Data are independent of people's perceptions.	*Subjective*—Data are perceptions of the people in the environment.
Instrumentation	*Non-human*—Preconstructed tests, observational records, questionnaires, and rating scales are employed.	*Human*—The human person is the primary data collection instrument.
Conditions	*Controlled*—Investigations are conducted under controlled conditions.	*Naturalistic*—Investigations are conducted under natural conditions.
Results	*Reliable*—The focus is on design and procedures to gain "hard" and replicable data.	*Valid*—The focus is on design and procedures to gain "real," "rich," and "deep" data.

interest in qualitative research methodology is growing. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that quantitative research methods (group or single subject) should not or will not continue to play an important role. In our opinion, both quantitative and qualitative research methods have important roles to play in the pursuit of basic knowledge and in improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities. The contributions of quantitative research methodology to the knowledge base in special education are well recognized. The contributions qualitative research has made, and potentially can make, are gaining increased recognition (Bercovici, 1983; Edgerton, 1984; Heshusius, 1981; Skrtic, 1988; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

2 / Utility and Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Incorporating qualitative research theory and methodology to a greater extent into education could potentially enhance the capabilities of researchers in education and the future progress of education. The characteristics of qualitative research make it well suited for certain purposes. In general, it can be used in education to focus on schools, classrooms, and other educational settings as social and cultural scenes, to describe these scenes, and to gain an understanding of how the individuals directly or indirectly involved in the scenes make sense of and give meaning to what is going on (Wolcott, 1984). That is, qualitative research can be used to study the social and cultural aspects of our schools. In doing this, qualitative research findings have been found to be useful in addressing a number of purposes.

HOLISTIC DESCRIPTION

An in-depth, holistic description of events, programs, procedures, and/or philosophies as they operate in context in natural settings is often needed in order to understand and make informed decisions. To gain such a description, a number of variables and their interrelationships often require attention and study.

Qualitative methodology provides the researcher with a way to gather a broad range and a variety of types of data and allows for the study of interrelationships among the data. Qualitative procedures also focus the researcher's attention on organizing the diverse and interrelated data gathered into a meaningful whole. Thus, qualitative research methodology can contribute to the research capabilities in special education by providing a way to develop in-depth, holistic descriptions.

Through holistic description the researcher has the opportunity to study the process or procedures inherent in an educational program or situation. While most research approaches tend to focus on the study of products, qualitative methodology, with its inherent

flexibility, allows the researcher to investigate and gain an understanding not only of products but also of how a program or situation operates, how it developed, and why a program did or did not work. Thus, data regarding process, as well as products, can be gained through the holistic descriptions possible in qualitative inquiry.

The context in which processes operate and products are developed also can be described and studied using qualitative research. Studying context is often complex and requires a research approach that allows for the collection of a wide variety of data in naturalistic settings. As noted by Smith (1986):

> When one considers the context of, say, a classroom, one must think of the physical space and objects within it, their arrangement, and the relationship between space, objects, and people, as well as density and climate. The relationships among people in the class establish a psychosocial context. The children bring to school a set of influences from their families, social classes, ethnic groups, and personal tendencies, all of which form the "ground" in a figure-ground Gestalt. The training and personal qualities of the teacher and the prior learning of the pupils are part of the educational context. Another part of context is the purpose for which individual events and the larger enterprise exist (for example, maintaining order and achieving instructional goals). The participants in the class hold different meanings for classroom events, and there is a collective "sense" of what is going on. (p. 39)

Finally, it should be noted that because qualitative research can be used for holistic descriptions, it is well suited for comparative research studies wherein educational programs or systems in two or more classrooms, schools, states, or even nations are compared. For example, what occurs in classrooms in the Soviet Union as compared to what occurs in America could be studied using qualitative research methods such as long-term participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and document analysis. Likewise, a researcher might want simply to compare what people do and how they think about, for instance, classroom discipline across several settings or levels in a particular school district such as in the classroom, at the school building level, and/or in the central administrative offices.

SOCIAL VALIDATION AND COGNITIVE REASONING

In recent years, a growing number of researchers in special education have become concerned with the study of subjective

values; that is, what people such as teachers and students think and feel about educational matters. This concern has resulted from the recognition that it is the subjective values of people regarding educational matters that often influence what occurs in educational settings, since people often make decisions based on what they think or believe. Thus, many researchers now recognize the importance of ascertaining what teachers, parents, and students (society) think about various programs, procedures, or philosophies. Some quantitative researchers have termed this "social validity" (Kazdin, 1977; Wolf, 1978). Social validity, as described by Wolf, is concerned with the following:

1. The social significance of the *goals.* Are the goals of current educational (or research) programs what society values or wants?
2. The social appropriateness of the *procedures.* Do the ends justify the means? That is, do teachers, parents, students, and other consumers consider the educational procedures and strategies acceptable or worthwhile?
3. The social importance of *outcomes.* Are consumers satisfied with the results of educational programs—all the results, including the positive, negative, predicted, and/or unpredicted ones?

The social validity of educational programs and activities is clearly a subjective value that only society is qualified to make (Wolf, 1978). And, as noted earlier, it is essential to understand what society thinks about educational programs (the goals, procedures, and outcomes) because it is society that will determine whether the programs are used, discarded, or modified.

Qualitative methodology could assist researchers in special education to gain a better understanding of what teachers, parents, and students think about educational matters. Qualitative methodology, by definition, is designed to determine "the subjective aspects of people's behavior" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The nondirective, open-ended nature of qualitative methodology enables the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people, without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories or rating scale items. In qualitative research, direct quotations—often obtained through unobtrusive observations and/or nondirective interviewing—are the raw data that reveal people's thoughts and perceptions. In many cases, the researcher is the only instrument and works at getting people to express their thoughts freely on particular topics. This unstructured, open-ended approach allows the people or participants in a given situation to answer from their own frame of reference rather than from one structured by prearranged questions. Thus, qualitative methodology can contribute to research in special

education by providing a means of investigating the social significance of the goals, procedures, and outcomes of educational programs.

Finally, in addition to studying what people think and believe about educational concerns and programs, qualitative research can be employed to investigate the reasoning and thought processes of people. That is, qualitative research is well suited to study how people, including teachers and students, remember things, make choices, and solve problems in everyday life. One example of how qualitative research has been used in special education to study cognitive processes is the work of Levine and Langness (1985). Using qualitative research methodology, they investigated and described in detail the problem-solving skills and processes persons labeled retarded employ when grocery shopping.

Theory Development

Theory provides guidance and direction for much educational inquiry. When a theory is built upon a wide variety of data gathered in natural educational settings, the probability of it being relevant and functional to educational practice is enhanced. As stated by Glaser and Strauss (1967):

> A theory that is faithful to the everyday realities of a substantive area is one that has been carefully induced from diverse field data. Only in this way will the theory be closely related to the daily realities (what is actually going on) in a substantive area and so be highly applicable to dealing with it. (p. 239)

Qualitative research is well suited for theory development. Qualitative researchers gather diverse data, including relevant quantitative data, about educational topics or concerns as they naturally occur in school and nonschool settings. Subsequently, they ferret out patterns and attempt to find consistencies or inconsistencies in the data in order to determine theories, ideas, or hypotheses. In contrast to quantitative researchers, they do not enter an investigation to verify a hypothesis or theory held prior to the investigation. Instead, hypotheses and theories are formulated as the investigation progresses, as the particulars from the data gathered are grouped together. Qualitative researchers begin with specific observations and build toward general patterns or theories. It is basically an inductive approach. That is, in qualitative research "you are not putting together a puzzle, whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture which takes shape as you collect and examine the parts" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 20). Thus, qualitative research could potentially be useful in contributing to the development of grounded theories and ideas in special education.

In summary, while qualitative research can be used to develop and confirm theories, as noted by Reichardt and Cook (1979) "to a large extent qualitative methods were purposely developed for the task of discovering or generating theories" (p. 17). Thus, by integrating qualitative research methodology to a greater extent into special education research, the field of special education could potentially benefit in terms of innovative ideas and theories emerging from a variety of diverse field data collected in naturalistic school settings. This could help bridge the gap between practice and theory in special education.

Before concluding this section on potential uses of qualitative research, it should be noted that some researchers are currently finding a use for qualitative research in evaluation studies and projects. However, the focus of qualitative inquiry is to gain understanding of a situation rather than to determine its value. Qualitative inquiry is, in general, nonjudgmental; that is, the researcher attempts to be nonjudgmental. Thus, qualitative research probably should be viewed as a complement to evaluation projects rather than as a method of evaluation. As described by Wolcott (1984), qualitative research is intended as a more descriptive and interpretive activity with the *purpose of understanding* the people and situations under study *rather than judging or evaluating* them.

Questions Addressed by Qualitative Research

Erickson* (1986) has outlined some specific questions qualitative research can be used to address. These are reviewed here since they help clarify and expand on some of the potential uses of qualitative research outlined to this point.

Some questions qualitative research can address are as follows:

1. What is happening, specifically, in a particular setting or settings?
2. What do these happenings mean to the people involved in them?
3. How are these happenings organized in patterns of social organization and learned cultural principles in the conduct of everyday life?
4. How is what is happening in this setting as a whole (e.g. the classroom) related to happenings at other system levels outside and inside the setting (e.g., the school building, a child's family, the school system, federal government mandates)?

*This section, including the questions and their explanations, was adapted by permission from Erickson (1986).

5. How do the ways everyday life in this setting is organized compare with other ways of organizing social and cultural life in a wide range of settings in other places and at other times?

Answers to such questions are often needed in educational research. They are needed for five reasons. The first reason concerns the invisibility of everyday life. "What is happening here?" may seem a trivial question at first glance. It is not trivial, since everyday life is largely invisible to us (because of its familiarity and because of its contradictions, which people may not want to face). We do not realize the patterns in our actions as we perform them. The anthropologist Clyde Kluckohn illustrated this point with an aphorism: "The fish would be the last creature to discover water."

A second reason these questions are not trivial is the need for specific understanding through documentation of concrete details of practice. Answering the question, "What is happening?" with a general answer often is not very useful. "The teacher (or students) in this classroom is (are) on task" often doesn't tell us the specific details that are needed in order to understand what is being done, especially in attempting to understand the points of view of the people involved. Similarly, the statement "The school district implemented a program to increase student time on task" does not tell enough about the extent and kind of implementation to allow us to speculate why test scores or other outcome measures do or do not show change. Qualitative fieldwork research can answer such questions in an adequately specific way.

A third reason these questions are not trivial concerns the need to consider the local meanings that happenings have for the people involved in them. Surface similarities in behavior are sometimes misleading in educational research. In different classrooms, schools, and communities, events that seem the same may have distinctly differing local meanings. Direct questioning of students by a teacher, for example, may be seen as rude and punitive in one setting, yet perfectly appropriate in another. Within a given setting, a certain behavior such as direct questioning may be appropriate for some children at one moment, and inappropriate at the next, from a given teacher's point of view at that time in the event being observed. When a research issue involves considering the distinctive local happenings and meanings, qualitative research may be the most appropriate method to use.

A fourth reason these main research questions of fieldwork are not trivial concerns the need for comparative understanding of different social and cultural settings. Considering the relationships between a setting and its wider social and cultural environments helps to clarify what is happening in the local setting itself. The observation "Teachers don't ask for extra materials; they just keep

using the same old texts and workbooks for each subject" may be factually accurate, but this could be interpreted quite differently depending on contextual circumstances. If school-system-wide regulations made ordering supplementary materials very difficult in a particular school district, then the teachers' actions could not simply be attributed to the spontaneous generation of local meanings by participants in the local scene—the "teacher culture" at that particular school. What the teachers do at the classroom and building level is influenced by what happens in wider spheres of social organization and cultural patterning. These wider spheres of influence must also be taken into account when investigating the narrower circumstances of the local scene.

The same applies to relationships of influence across settings at the same system level, such as the classroom and the home. Behavior that may be considered inappropriate in school may be seen as quite appropriate and reasonable in community and family life. For example, children may be encouraged in the family to be generous in helping one another; in the classroom this may be seen by the teacher as attempted cheating.

A fifth reason for the importance of this set of questions concerns the need for comparative understanding beyond the immediate circumstances of the local setting. Researchers and school practitioners alike may be tempted to think of what is happening in the standard operating procedures of everyday life as the way things must and ought to be, always and everywhere. Contrasting life in United States classrooms with school life in other societies, and to life in other institutional contexts such as hospitals and factories, broadens one's sense of the range of possibilities for organizing teaching and learning effectively in human groups. Knowing about other ways of organizing formal and nonformal education by looking back into human history, and by looking across to other contemporary societies around the world, can shed new light on the local happenings in a particular school.

The fieldworker asks continually while in the field setting, "How does what is happening here compare with what happens in other places?" Awareness of this does not necessarily lead to immediate practical solutions in planning change. The comparative perspective does inform attempts at planning change, however. By taking a comparative perspective, people can distinguish the spuriously distinctive and the genuinely distinctive features of their own circumstances. That can lead them to be at once more realistic and more imaginative than they would otherwise have been in thinking about change.

Finally, it should be noted that Ogbu (1981) has argued strongly that qualitative researchers examine the relationship between the educational system and other institutions in society. "School

enthrography should be *holistic;* it should show how education is linked with the economy, the political system, local social structure, and the belief system of the people served by the schools" (p. 6).

TYPES OF QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Qualitative research investigations can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. One perspective is whether an investigation is a case study or a multiple subject or site investigation. In general, most researchers select a case study as one of their initial qualitative inquiry endeavors. A case study involves the researcher in examining in detail a single person, setting, situation, event, or group of documents. Case studies are generally easier and require fewer resources than multiple site/subject investigations. Multiple site/subject investigations are detailed examinations of multiple settings, people, events, or groups of documents. They are often more complex and frequently oriented to a greater extent toward the development of theory rather than description; they may involve many sites or people. Most qualitative studies probably fall somewhere in complexity between small case studies and large multiple subject/site studies.

Qualitative inquiry can also focus on either a historical or contemporary perspective. While a contemporary focus would involve current perspectives, a historical focus might concentrate on a single period in the past or progressive change from some point in the past up to and including current perspectives. However, the feasibility of conducting a study involving historical perspectives is dependent on the availability of quality data sources relevant to the investigation. Data sources such as existing records and/or the opportunity to interview persons who have some association with the past event(s), person(s) and/or setting(s) must be sufficient to allow for the development of a credible piece of work.

As an example of an historical study, a qualitative researcher might be interested in how institutions for persons labeled handicapped were perceived by the general public in the state of New York during the 1800s. On the other hand, some qualitative researchers do life histories. For example, they might interview a person (or persons) classified as retarded and the family, friends, teachers, and other acquaintances to establish a life history. The purpose might be to gain a better understanding of the life and perspectives of a person classified as retarded.

Qualitative investigations also differ in type based on the predominant data collection methods used. For instance, qualitative investigations can be of the participant-observation, in-depth

interview, document collection, or photography/videotape type, along with types that combine two or more.

Participant-observation and in-depth interviewing are probably the most common and are frequently used in combination. In participant-observation the researcher enters into and often participates in the lives and natural settings of the people he or she wants to study and systematically and unobtrusively collects data on what they say and do. In in-depth interview studies, the researcher conducts unstructured, open-ended interviews directed toward understanding people's perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words.

Data collection methods less commonly used are document collection and photography/videotape materials. In document collection the researcher often collects and analyses such materials as newspaper articles, photographs, videotapes, films, books, journal articles, letters, diaries, memos, and official records for the purpose of understanding people's actions and perceptions. While document collection and analysis tends to be used mostly for supplementary information in contemporary studies, in historical investigations it may be one of the main data collection methods used.

Finally, the collection of data through photographs or audio and videotape mediums is also a viable means of collecting qualitative data. Photographs and tapes can provide strikingly descriptive information. The photographic essay entitled *Christmas in Purgatory* by Blatt and Kaplan (1966) is an excellent example of how photography has been used in special education to help describe a particular set of subjects and settings. However, care must be taken that photographs and tapes do not distance the researcher and participants, interfering with the researcher's understanding of the perceptions and actions of the participants. (It should be noted that since photographs generally reflect what is important to the photographer, and the perceptions of the participants constitute the critical element of understanding in qualitative inquiry, it might be worthwhile in some instances to allow the participants to serve as the photographer[s].)

Other types of qualitative research include microethnographic research, ethnomethodology, and ethnological research. The microethnographic method is probably the most often used in education and thus will be reviewed here. According to Murray, Anderson, Bersani, and Mesaros (1986) such research is often used in attempts to understand the process by which participants in interactions mutually negotiate the detailed verbal and nonverbal requirements of social situations. That is, microethnographic studies in education document the fine details of verbal and nonverbal communication between teachers and students in classrooms. For example, a microethnography study might describe in detail turn-taking during

a reading lesson, free play in kindergarten, or teachers' use of movement and speech in classroom management. This sort of research often combines participant-observation methods with frame-by-frame analysis of the audiovisual records of selected face-to-face interactions. These audiovisual recordings are usually made only after extensive field work in the setting, so that ethnographic knowledge will inform the selection and the data analysis processes. Also, ideally, these studies should link their detailed descriptions of face-to-face interaction to the broader educational and sociopolitical context hypothesized to shape these interactions (Murray et al., 1986).

While there are a number of different types of qualitative research, the primary emphasis in this book will be on the mainstays of qualitative research, that is, basic field research done primarily through participant observation and in-depth interviewing.

APPROACHES TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

There are a number of different traditions or approaches within qualitative research (Smith, 1987). The approach outlined in this book is primarily an academic or scholarly one. The emphasis is on carefully collecting data in natural field settings and describing for the reader the research process, findings, and interpretations of the researcher. The specific characteristics of this approach are explained in the remainder of this book.

The approach that most differs from the academic/scholarly approach is the artistic approach. As noted by Smith (1987):

> The artistic approach departs most obviously from familiar formats in scholarly journals. The report is an artistic rendering, usually a narrative account, of what the researcher has discovered. In [artistic] research, the investigator seeks to experience directly the qualities inherent in the setting, appreciate the meanings held by the people there, and then represent these discoveries so that the reader can have a vicarious experience of the case. (p. 178)

The data collection methods and research processes are often individualistically and intuitively determined and the report written may be "creative" in style. The researcher may use elements of storytelling, such as dramatic structure, interpretive ordering of events, narrative voice, and generative metaphors. The report written may be in a narrative and anecdotal style commonly used by novelists and journalists.

When reading such reports, the research consumer must rely on the completeness, coherence, and internal consistency of the

account; whether it penetrated and illuminated the subject; its plausibility; and the credibility of the author. Such work probably should be afforded considerably more latitude than that of other researchers (Smith, 1987). According to Eisner (1981):

> Validity in the arts is the product of the persuasiveness of a personal vision; its utility is determined by the extent to which it informs. . . . What one seeks is illumination and penetration. The proof of the pudding is the way in which it shapes our conception of the world or some aspect of it. (p.6)

While we do not follow the artistic approach in this book, we do believe that the artistic as well as the academic/scholarly approach to qualitative research should receive more attention in education. We need to keep an open mind about what might be gained from all types of approaches to increasing our sensitivities, understandings, and knowledge base.

SCOPE OF INVESTIGATIONS

The scope or breadth of qualitative research investigations vary considerably. An investigation might be simple or complex, dealing with a single event or multiple events. Likewise, as noted in a previous section, an investigation might be small or large, focused on a single student, school, or group home (case study) or include large groups of parents, educators, and students and several settings (multiple subject/site). Thus, a qualitative researcher could investigate how a single child feels when he or she receives a failing grade in school; or a team of qualitative researchers, assuming appropriate resources, could conduct a national study of the racial desegregation process in the public schools. As another example, a qualitative researcher or researchers might want to investigate how community-based job training for individuals labeled retarded is being carried out in a particular school, school district, city, state, or region of the country. The scope of qualitative inquiry possibilities is considerable.

Another aspect regarding the scope of an investigation concerns the need in qualitative research to look at events occurring at any one system level (e.g. classroom, school building, school district) in the context of events occurring at other system levels. The researcher typically begins with the most comprehensive possible survey of the setting and its surrounding environments. Erickson (1986) provides a concrete example. In studying a classroom, one would first seek an overall sense of the neighborhood school community by collecting written information on the school community (e.g. census data) and walking and visiting around the

community and school as a whole. One would then enter the classroom and observe for complete days, from before the students arrive until they leave at the end of the day. Having identified the full range of events that occurred in the day, the researcher could begin to focus on those events that are of central interest in the study. That is, the researcher would begin to restrict the range of times and places at which observation occurred. Periodically, however, the researcher may want to return to more comprehensive sampling, in order to restore breadth of perspective. As noted by Erickson (1986): "In fieldwork one never considers a single system level in isolation from other levels; that is a basic feature of the sociocultural theory from which participant observational methods derive" (p. 143).

In general, qualitative researchers tend to sacrifice scope or breadth in a study to allow for the development of an increased depth of understanding of a topic of inquiry. Use of multiple researchers in an investigation or prolonging the duration of the study may increase breadth without limiting depth. Decisions concerning the scope of an investigation will rely heavily on the resources available to conduct the investigation. The greater the resources available, the less restrictive an investigator needs to be. In the final analysis, however, given the resources available, the scope of an investigation will depend on the particular interests, purposes, and experiences of the researcher(s) conducting the investigation.

DURATION OF STUDIES

There is no way to give an easy answer to how long it takes to do a qualitative research study. Some studies last a few months, while others last several years. The "typical" study probably lasts about a year. But the actual length or duration depends on the resources, interests, and purposes of the investigator. It also depends on the size of the study and how much time the researcher puts into the study each day or week.

Having stated the above, however, it should be noted that it is usually the longer and more intensely one studies a phenomenon, the deeper and more thorough the understanding it is possible to achieve. The reason is that prolonged engagement renders the researcher open to multiple influences—all the particulars and contextual factors—that impinge upon the phenomenon being studied. It helps the researcher identify those characteristics and elements that are most relevant to the topic, problem, or issue being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a rule of thumb, the researcher

needs to simply "stick with it" until he or she feels sure that nothing else could be gained by continuing the study.

CONCLUSION

Qualitative research endeavors, while varying widely in purpose, scope, and duration, generally constitute a major endeavor if worthwhile, in-depth findings regarding a topic are to be achieved. In the next chapter, organizing and structuring a qualitative research study are discussed. It is becoming increasingly important for educators to have a general understanding of the methodology of this emerging approach to research.

3 / Structuring a Qualitative Research Study

While we discuss qualitative research methods in this chapter, it is critical that methodology not be allowed to supersede the interpretive, intuitive thought processes of the researcher. In fact, to establish a predefined methodology or methods pool from which to choose for conducting qualitative investigations is considered poor practice by some qualitative theorists (Smith, 1988). However, it would likewise be questionable to imply that for each investigation, methods, procedures, and strategies used to collect, organize, and analyze data need to be developed anew. Instead, by becoming familiar with methods and safeguards successfully used by others, an investigator can capitalize on the worthwhile experiences and ideas of others for carrying out qualitative research, while keeping firmly in mind that such methods should not be allowed to interfere with or override the researcher's purposes, aims, and motives.

The methods outlined in this and the following two chapters are meant to serve as suggestions or guidelines rather than as rules for conducting qualitative research. The methods are simply those that some qualitative researchers have found helpful. There is no one certified correct set of methods for use in qualitative research.

While most qualitative researchers do not follow any set of orthodox rules or methods, they generally give careful consideration to structuring, conducting and reporting their studies so that others will consider them logical, reasonable, and credible. Unfortunately, the flexibility of approach inherent in qualitative research methodology has, in some cases, been confused with a haphazard, freewheeling attempt to collect data (Rist, 1980). While flexibility in qualitative research is essential to its exploratory, discovery orientation, it cannot be conducted haphazardly and be expected to produce findings worthy of consideration by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers in education engaging in qualitative research endeavors must make decisions regarding procedural strategies throughout their investigation(s); and they need to articulate clearly the strategies chosen in order to provide a framework from which the data collected can be understandable and perceived in proper perspective by others. As noted by Smith (1987), "Because there is

no catalog of qualitative designs or certified methods, thoughtful researchers describe what they did in detail" (p. 175).

It should be stressed that methodological decisions in this type of research are not made before the investigation. The qualitative researcher usually enters the investigation with only a general idea of what he or she wants to study. Specific research questions, hypotheses, participants, design, procedures, and data collection methods evolve and take focus as the study progresses. Such decisions are guided by the data after the study is under way. Thus, the specific questions asked and methods employed are grounded in data from the "real" world.

In this chapter, we will review methodological considerations involved in structuring a qualitative research investigation. The considerations discussed are organized around six major topics: performing the pre-fieldwork, beginning the study, selecting the participants and settings, establishing rapport, developing the researcher's role, and selecting a research strategy.

PRE-FIELDWORK STAGE

Focusing on an Area of Inquiry

Focusing on an area of inquiry is an important pre-fieldwork activity. Although the specific questions are not predetermined, in general the qualitative researcher does begin the inquiry process with some area of interest, problem, or set of issues about a program or topic.

A critical part of pre-fieldwork is investigating the available knowledge base concerning the general topic, problem, or issue prior to actual fieldwork (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Malinowski, 1922). The literature studied may include not only research monographs and journal articles but also documents such as official reports, journalistic exposes, autobiographies, dramas, and novels. The researcher might also talk with other professionals who have expertise or an interest in the area.

An investigator can increase the probability of studying a worthwhile concern in a meaningful way by acquiring a knowledge base about current theories and understandings in a particular topical or substantive area. However, while it may be beneficial to gather as much information as possible during the pre-fieldwork stage, the researcher must avoid the formulation of preconceived ideas or hypotheses to whatever degree possible. In fact, some qualitative researchers are hesitant to gather and review information about a problem area prior to beginning fieldwork, since it is essential that the researcher enter an investigation with as few

preconceived ideas and hypotheses as possible. Each investigator must evaluate what is appropriate in his or her own particular case. If in doubt, the best approach to take, in our view, has been described by Krueger (1987): "[Researchers] may use an orienting framework derived from related literature, but should remain open to generating new theories that may emerge through data collection and analysis, and the possibility of discarding the initial theories" (p. 73).

Exploring Research Sites

Another activity carried out during the pre-fieldwork stage is the exploration of research sites. This involves locating a site or sites that are suitable and accessible to the researcher for investigating the area of concern. Research sites can be determined in a number of ways—talking with friends or other researchers, knowing someone who works in a possible research site, or simply from past experiences visiting, working, or doing research in various schools or other research sites. The site exploration process also might include making brief visits to several possible sites and observing, collecting documents, and talking with people about the site(s).

The researcher's familiarity with a site should be considered. While knowing the general characteristics of a research site and its suitability for the purposes of the research is essential, the researcher probably should avoid, in most cases, sites where he or she has been or is integrally involved. The more integrally involved a researcher has been or is with the site selected for investigation (e.g., the researcher's place of work), the more difficult it is to see beyond what is expected. Preconceptions can interfere with the researcher's observation attempts. In addition, in sites in which the researcher is a familiar figure, she or he is not generally able to gain acceptance on the scene as a novice, newcomer, or learner but rather is expected to be an expert or experienced participant.

Once a site or sites are selected, the researcher can begin other steps in the research process.

BEGINNING THE STUDY

Initiating a qualitative research study involves two major elements. The first is to gain permission to do the research from the person in charge of the site where the research will be conducted. (This may have been done at the time of site exploration.) The second is to actually enter the research site and become a natural part of the site to whatever degree possible.

Gaining Permission

The first step is to contact the person in charge, or "gatekeeper" (e.g. Director of Special Education, principal, or the houseparents in a group home), for an appointment to explain the general purpose of the study and how you plan to approach the task. While there is disagreement in the qualitative research literature about how much you should tell the gatekeeper, the best policy, in our opinion, is to be straightforward and honest about what your purpose is and what you will be doing. Provide enough detail to clarify the project in a general way, but be as brief as possible.

The researcher's interest is in gaining permission that is as pervasive or broad as possible. Ideally, the fieldworker wants to be able to observe anywhere in the research site at any time, and to be able to interview any member of the site on any topic (Erickson, 1986). This, of course, may not always be possible, but it is a goal to strive for when negotiating permission, since you do not usually know in advance the research questions that will evolve from the research process, in what specific settings observations will be needed, and/or with whom you will need to talk.

As a general rule, it is important to explain that confidentiality and anonymity of the site and participants will be maintained, if applicable to the investigation being conducted. Also, it is generally good policy to indicate that the results of the investigation will be shared with the school system or community agency involved, but again this should be evaluated in terms of the appropriateness of doing so. Finally, some researchers recommend the preparation of a brief form that summarizes the agreement between the gatekeeper and researcher; both parties should sign the form and maintain copies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Entering the Field

Researchers should enter the research site in such a way as to alter, disturb, or intrude upon the natural environment as little as possible. In most cases, the researcher's goal is to become a natural part of the scene, someone whom everybody takes for granted and who "belongs."

Just as the researcher must guard against being an intrusive, disruptive force in the setting, he or she must likewise guard against going to the other extreme and experiencing what Fetterman (1986) refers to as fieldwork paralysis. Some researchers become so involved in not intruding on or interfering with the setting they literally paralyze their efforts to collect information. Care must be taken to ensure that neither extreme undermines the data collection process of the investigation.

During the early stages of fieldwork, the researcher should try not to be overly anxious and rush things, but should feel out the situation, come on slow, play it by ear, and learn the ropes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Dobbert (1982) has provided an excellent description of how a researcher might enter the research site.

> The best thing a fieldworker can do is relax and try not to be in a hurry to gather data. Mutual introductions; general discussion of the research purpose, of the researcher's presence and position, of issues of confidentiality; and ordinary polite conversation are the main events of the early research stage. Pushing is not likely to hurry the pace at which data emerge. The researcher need not try to become a wishy-washy nobody with no opinions, or an eager puppy, ready to follow anyone around who pays the slightest attention. It is sufficient to be friendly. Relaxing means being yourself, but being flexible enough to fit the new situation. (pp. 87–88)

There are no hard and fast rules to follow when entering a research site or gaining permission to conduct research. Each situation is unique. However, in most situations, it is beneficial to be as straightforward, honest, relaxed, and friendly as possible.

SELECTING SETTINGS AND PARTICIPANTS/ INFORMANTS*

Once access to a research site has been gained, the settings within that site and the participants or informants in the setting need to be selected. Some qualitative researchers may choose to focus on a single setting or type of setting while others may choose to select multiple settings or types. Likewise the researcher may choose to study the perceptions and/or actions of a single person or a small or large group of people within any given setting. However, just like other aspects of qualitative methodology, setting and participant

*Qualitative researchers usually use the terms *participants* or *informants* as opposed to *research subjects*. A primary reason is that the natural *participants* in a setting or situation *inform* the researcher, as opposed to the researcher manipulating experimental procedures using research subjects to find out something. It should be noted that the term informant does not mean that qualitative researchers are interested in people informing on others but rather in people informing him or her about their own point of view by what they do and say.

selection procedures do not occur on a totally a priori basis. Approaches to selection generally evolve as the investigation progresses.

In regard to setting selection, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) have pointed out the need for the setting(s) to be representative of the organization or topic under study. It also has been noted that relevant conditions such as time (hour/day/month/year) and physical and social characteristics operating in a setting may influence the data collected (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Thus, it is essential when conducting qualitative research to recognize and account for such conditions in order to accurately reflect and analyze the data collected.

There are also several points that should be kept in mind when selecting the participants to be observed or interviewed. One is that it is important to avoid concentrating exclusively on one or a handful of people, if you desire a comprehensive understanding. "Do not assume that all informants [participants] share the same perspective. They seldom do" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). It has been recommended that qualitative researchers consciously seek out and maintain diversity within the population under study (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Diversity is needed in selection of participants or informants on relevant variables which may include age, role, status, and/or subgroup affiliation. In addition, as noted by Wilson (1977) and Fetterman (1986), other participant selection factors could influence the data. For example, choosing to associate with certain participants may reduce access in terms of openness in sharing information or data by other participants or informants. Similarly, participants who tend to gravitate toward the researcher in a setting may be atypical. Thus, it is not always easy to obtain diversity in participants, but it is essential if a broad range of views is desired.

In general, relatively flexible sampling procedures are used in the participant selection process in qualitative research. One common procedure is referred to as *snowballing*, in which the initially selected participants recommend other participants for inclusion and so on. This is often used as a procedure to get initial participant input. Once an initial knowledge base is gleaned, a qualitative researcher may move to a second type of sampling referred to as *purposeful*. In purposeful sampling, as the study proceeds, participants are included according to relevant criteria determined by the researcher based on an analysis of the data being collected and the emerging research questions. That is, the choice of participants is based on the researcher's perception of their ability to facilitate the expansion of the data base.

As noted by Filstead (1979), in this sampling procedure

> Whom one selects to study, while initially guided by the research topic, undergoes changes based on what data are being collected and the direction such information suggests with respect to who can provide additional information to answer emerging questions that were generated by the research process. (p. 38)

Such sampling procedures, while requiring considerable attention and effort on the part of the researcher, allow for flexibility unattainable with the random sampling approach most commonly used in quantitative methodology.

Example: Purposeful Sampling

Koegel and Edgerton (1984) describe how they purposefully selected a sample of 12 adults to gain an understanding of black "six-hour retarded children" as young adults:

> The larger sample from which these 12 were selected consisted of 45 black adults, all of whom had IQs below 70 and/or had attended EMR classes . . . . The subsample of 12 was selected on one criterion: Ethnographic field researchers, during the course of their first visits with these individuals, expressed serious doubts that they were, in fact, retarded. These 12 individuals, when compared with the larger sample, clearly had more normal lives. They were more often living on their own or in independent living programs; were more likely to be competitively employed, or if not competitively employed, to be unemployed (as opposed to working in a sheltered workshop); and were more often married. (p. 146)

Another consideration the researcher should take into account is the need to recognize and, if necessary, accommodate for setting-participant interaction. As noted by Patton (1980), data provided by participants may vary based on the place, activity engaged in, or social variables operating in a setting at the time the data are collected. Thus, to fully recognize the meaning of any data gathered, the researcher must be aware of participant characteristics, conditions operating in the setting, and the multifaceted interaction

of these factors. (It should be noted that many of the considerations discussed above regarding the selection of settings are important for selecting and understanding research sites also.)

Perhaps the most important consideration is that the researcher (a) provide a description of the setting and research site and the conditions operating at the time the data were gathered and (b) report exactly how the participants were selected and their characteristics. In this way the reader can judge for him or herself the appropriateness of the site, setting, and participants to the research questions and what generalizations or comparisons might be made in regard to the findings.

Example: Setting and Participant Description

Brady and Cunningham (1985) provide an example of how settings and participants can be described in a case study they conducted to gain an understanding of the life style of a young woman labeled severely retarded:

> Sandy was 20 years old at the beginning of the study. She had severe cerebral palsy that affected her motor functioning, was not independently mobile in her wheelchair, and had limited expressive communication skills. Service providers considered Sandy to be socially aware although she lacked the communication skills to regularly initiate and maintain ongoing social interactions. Her receptive communication was thought to be very good by both school and residential staff and she was engaged in a three-choice expressive communication program at school.
>
> [The study was conducted where Sandy lived and went to school.] Sandy lived in a residential facility, "Clearview Homes," which housed 27 people with severe multiple handicaps. Clearview Homes' main facility also housed the agency's administrative offices. Although the Clearview Homes program had been designed for children with severe handicaps, a number of adults also lived in the facility.
>
> Each day Sandy was bused to Metro Special School approximately 15 miles away. She was in a class of eight students, aged 13 to 20 years, five of whom also lived at Clearview. Metro was a school for students with severe multiple handicaps built by the local metropolitan school system in 1975. (p. 242)

It should be noted that this example focuses on setting and participant description and does not include a description of the research site and broader community, which is also important in many instances.

ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

Rapport is a relationship of mutual trust and emotional affinity between two or more people. Establishing rapport is an important task for the qualitative researcher. Research informants or participants are much more likely to be candid and forthright and to behave as they normally do if they trust the researcher, have a warm and friendly relationship with him or her, and believe in his or her integrity. The development of rapport, then, is something to which the qualitative researcher must attend from the inception of the investigation. In a very real sense the ultimate credibility of the findings depends upon the extent to which rapport has been established (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In attempting to establish and maintain rapport, the researcher should consider his or her personal appearance. Such factors as dress, hairstyle, speech, and stance can influence the degree of acceptance possible in a given setting. The researcher should also recognize the influence of other personal characteristics that can facilitate or hinder rapport, such as sex, race, age, and ethnic background, even though these factors cannot, in general, be changed.

In addition to recognizing the dress and physical characteristics that can influence rapport, the researcher should become aware of and respect social, cultural, and political concerns of participants and their influence in settings. Likewise, as a general rule, protocol, or the accepted rules of etiquette and form in the setting, should be understood and followed.

While the development of rapport begins at the very first contact, it should be viewed as a *developmental task* that continues throughout the entire investigation. As noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), "Trust is not something that suddenly appears after certain matters have been accomplished . . . but something to be worked on day to day" (p. 257).

There are a number of things that can be done to help establish rapport. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) have offered the following suggestions.

1. Accommodate yourself to the routines of the informants or participants and their ways of doing things.
2. Try to establish what you have in common with them. Get to know them through conversations about fishing, children, sickness, past jobs, and food.
3. Help people out and become a participant observer, when feasible, in their daily activities. That is, try to be an integral part of their activities.

4. Display interest in what people have to say and what they are doing.
5. Act like a person who belongs but at the same time be yourself. Don't overdo it by trying to be something you are not. It is important to relax and be yourself to whatever degree possible.

Example: Establishing Rapport

Edgerton, Bollinger, and Herr (1984) describe how the researchers in a study they conducted developed rapport with 21 adults labeled mildly mentally retarded. Their purpose was to study the daily lives, values, and community adjustment of persons labeled retarded living in community settings.

> All of these persons were visited at their residences, were invited to restaurants, driven on errands, taken grocery shopping, and otherwise accompanied as they went about many of their everyday activities. Between visits, many telephone conversations were initiated to maintain rapport and to fill in gaps in information. Conversations were allowed to develop naturally until sufficient rapport had been established to permit discussion of the topics [of interest] including self-esteem, stigma, social competence, life satisfaction, reliance on benefactors and other sources of support, quality of life, and the effects of aging.
>
> Given the constant [twice monthly] and long-term nature of the contact [30 months], close relationships developed. As the researchers became valued and trusted friends, frank and open conversations become possible. (p. 346)

Qualitative researchers generally attempt to cultivate rapport with one or two respected and knowledgeable people in the setting during the earlier stages of an investigation. These people are sometimes called *key informants*. They can be the researcher's sponsors in the setting and main sources of information earlier in the investigation. They can tell you the history of the setting and help guide you in the earlier stages. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), qualitative researchers try to find people who will "take them under their wing, show them around, introduce them to others, vouch for them, tell them how to act, and let them know how they are seen by others" (p. 41).

While establishing rapport with one or two key informants can be valuable in the earlier stages of an investigation, it is imperative that the researcher not rely solely on key informants. As the investigation progresses, the researcher may want to expand his or her sources of information and data; thus it is important to establish rapport with a wide variety of people who possess various and sometimes contradictory viewpoints and ideas. This is essential in order to gain a fair and holistic view of the topic, program, procedure or whatever is being investigated. Remember that in qualitative research all viewpoints and perspectives are valuable.

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

Almost any role assumed by the researcher can result in worthwhile data, since data gathered under any given role relationship with the informants in the research site does delineate some facet of a total picture. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) have noted, each of these facets constitutes a slice of data which, when taken together with other pieces of data, can contribute to a total picture. While almost any data are worthwhile, it should be stressed that the data collected and the subsequent conclusions drawn from the data are, of necessity, qualified by the role the investigator assumes within the research site (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Generally speaking, the better the rapport developed and the more relevant the role assumed by the researcher, the greater the depth of understanding of the data.

It has been recommended that the researcher select a role association in which the informants or participants can come to value and trust the researcher enough to be willing to act as they typically do, to share intimate thoughts, and/or to answer the often large number of questions asked by the researcher (Bruyn, 1966). As noted by Fetterman (1986), the researcher must develop an association allowing implicit trust with the participants and adopt a nonjudgmental orientation toward the participants' statements and actions. This facilitates acceptance of and communication with the researcher as a group member by the participants. For example, the field workers in research conducted by Edgerton (1967), Edgerton and Bercovici (1976) and Edgerton, Bollinger, and Herr (1984) became familiar friends in the natural setting to gain an understanding of the values and goals of persons labeled mentally retarded beyond their exterior "mask of concealment."

When the researcher succeeds in gaining informants' confidence and trust, ethical considerations require attention. With acceptance by participants more in-depth, personal, private information is revealed. In such cases the researcher needs to evaluate carefully

what and how much of the information should be disclosed. Assuming a position of trust carries with it ethical responsibilities that must be seriously evaluated by the researcher.

A role association that has been repeatedly recognized as being potentially worthwhile for the researcher, at least on an initial basis, is to assume the position of a "learner" (Lofland, 1971). This is easier to do if the participants recognize the researcher as new or naive to the operation of the setting. In this position the researcher tends to be less threatening since he or she is perceived as a "learner" rather than an "evaluator" or "critic." Likewise, participants are more likely to share information and confidences about a situation in order to "help out." When a researcher, however, investigates a familiar setting, he or she is generally cast into the position of the expert, making the novice or learner position impossible. Similarly, in a complete participation situation, expectations of a peer are more stringent and "not knowing" is less tolerated. Thus the "learner" role is not always an option. However, its usefulness is clarified in the statement by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983): "It is only through watching, listening, asking questions, formulating hypotheses and making blunders that the ethnographer can acquire some sense of the social structure of the setting and begin to understand the culture of participants" (p. 89).

Example: Role of Researcher

Researchers assumed the role of students eager to learn about mental retardation in a year-long study of attendants' perspectives on their supervisors, their jobs, and the residents in a state institution (Bogdan, Taylor, de Grandpre, & Haynes, 1974).

> The observers, in participant observation style, spent large amounts of time with the attendants in the natural setting interacting with them as they went about their normal activities. They presented themselves as university students who were interested in mental retardation and were successful in developing a rapport characterized by trust and candor. (p. 196)

In *Migrants, Sharecroppers, Mountaineers,* Robert Coles (1971) described the role he assumed.

> A listener, an observer, a doctor, a curious . . . fellow who one mountaineer described as "always coming back and not seeming to know exactly what he wants to hear or know." (p. 39)

Becker (1970) recommends consistent monitoring of the ongoing role relationship operating between the researcher and informants. An approach generally used for such monitoring involves determining differences in what people say and do in the presence of the researcher and what they say and do with others when the researcher is not around (Becker, 1970). One way to do this is by asking key informants what people do and say when the researcher is not around. This can provide the researcher with clues as to whether or not he or she has developed the rapport and trust necessary to allow informants to be straightforward and truthful.

Possibly the most difficult task of the qualitative researcher is to remain detached while being empathically involved. Abrahamson (1983) has noted that the researcher needs to become one of the participants in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their values and perceptions, without going completely "native." It is important that the researcher not become totally engulfed by the experience. When a researcher goes "too" native, identifying with a group to the point of joining the group, data collection responsibilities are typically abandoned (Fetterman, 1986). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) have provided a succinct description of the role qualitative researchers typically must strive to assume.

> In one way, researchers join the subjects' [participants' or informants'] world, but in another way they remain detached. They attempt to learn from the subjects, but not necessarily be like the subjects. They may participate in their activities, but on a more limited basis. They learn how the subjects think, but they do not think like the subjects. They are empathetic, but also reflective. (p. 119)

As can be gleaned from the above discussion, the role of the researcher is involved and complex. This is one reason why researchers in disciplines where qualitative research has traditionally been employed (e.g., anthropology) often receive firsthand experience assisting experienced researchers in field settings before organizing and conducting qualitative research of their own.

Finally, because interpretation of data depends on knowing the role the researcher assumed in the field, research reports should clearly identify the researcher's role and status within the population(s) investigated. Qualitative researchers customarily label their investigative stance toward informants according to the social role they assumed and describe the content and development of social status and position accorded them by the informants (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

STRATEGY

The strategy used in qualitative inquiry gives direction to the investigation. There are a number of strategy types and variations. Two commonly employed strategies are discussed here.

One is referred to as *analytic induction*. Katz (1983) characterizes it as a method of arriving at a reasonable fit between data and explanations of social phenomena.

The analytic induction strategy can be employed when the researcher has a specific problem, question, or issue in mind and wants to develop a hypothesis or theory about it. He or she collects data regarding the problem or issue from an initial case—for example, one informant, classroom, or school. From this initial data set, a tentative hypothesis is developed based on an analysis of categories and patterns observed in the data. Subsequently, other cases are chosen for study. Data from these cases are then used by the researcher to rewrite or modify the hypothesis, and this sequence continues until the hypothesis becomes clearly defined. At this point, the researcher begins choosing "negative" cases that are not expected to fit the hypothesis that has evolved. The principle governing the selection process is that new cases should be selected that maximize the chances of discovering a negative case that disproves the hypothesis or elements of the hypothesis. The researcher continues to select new cases, enlarging and testing the hypothesis until no further cases can be located that do not fit. In this way, theory regarding a topic, issue, program, or concern is developed.

Denzin (1978) has described what is involved in the analytic induction strategy in the following steps:

1. Develop a rough definition of what is being studied based on the topic of interest.
2. Formulate a hypothesis to explain it based on initial data gathered in the field.
3. Study one case (e.g., one informant, classroom or school) to see the fit between the case and the hypothesis.
4. If the hypothesis does not explain the case, either reformulate the hypothesis or redefine what is being studied.
5. Actively search for negative cases to disprove the hypothesis.
6. When negative cases are encountered, reformulate the hypothesis or redefine what is being studied.
7. Proceed until one has adequately tested the hypothesis.

The purpose of the analytic induction strategy is to continue to collect data until no case can be found that does not fit. However, generally speaking, such a task is too massive for most researchers

to accomplish in a single investigation. As a result a *modified analytic induction* strategy has been developed for practical purposes (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979). In the modified approach, the researcher may tightly define a population, thus limiting the applicability of the hypothesis or theory that evolves from the investigation to a specifically defined group. Or, a researcher may determine the number of cases that he or she has the resources to handle in an investigation and simply base the hypothesis and testing of the hypothesis on those cases, making no claim that the hypothesis or theory that results is inclusive beyond the defined set.

Example: Analytic Induction Strategy

The following is a hypothetical example developed by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) of how the analytic induction strategy might operate in an investigation.

> Jonah Glenn is interested in teacher effectiveness. He thinks that some teachers do a better job at teaching than others and is interested in understanding why (Blase, 1980). That is his general topic and focus. He starts his study with an in-depth interview of long open-ended tape-recorded discussion with the teacher. He encourages her to talk about her career, her thoughts about teaching and how they have changed over time, and about the question of effectiveness.
>
> During the interview, the teacher describes in detail her disillusionment during her first few weeks teaching when her optimism (concerning what she thought she could accomplish, her plans about how she would conduct herself, and the nature of her relationship with students) confronted "the reality" of her new job. A teacher for twenty years, she describes a variety of issues: the ups and downs of her career, the changing definitions about her role, some of her first teaching experiences, the relationship of her work to her personal life, and what a good teacher is all about for her. In addition, she discusses schools she has taught in and how particular aspects of them contributed to her satisfaction, as well as to her performance in class. She describes her current position and evaluates it in relation to her perceived effectiveness. As a supplement to the interview, Jonah visits the teacher's school and observes her in action.

Continued

Example *Continued*

From that initial interview and observation, Jonah Glenn develops a loose descriptive theory of teacher effectiveness. It consists of a career-stage model in which effectiveness is defined differently at various periods in the teacher's career. The problems faced, and decisions made about how to meet them are included in the theory. It also integrates the teacher's personal life with her professional life to explain effectiveness. Particular aspects of schools and the teacher's relationships with others are also included. The theory consists of propositional statements and a diagram of career and career contingencies as they relate to effectiveness. In addition, his formulation defines effectiveness and explains its dimensions.

After Jonah has sketched out his theory, he picks a second teacher to interview. In picking the first few teachers, Jonah used the snowball sampling technique; that is, he asked the first person he interviewed to recommend others. He interviewed the second in a similar open-ended manner.

After the second interview, Jonah rewrites and modifies the theory to fit the new case. He continues choosing and interviewing new people, modifying the theory to fit each new case. After a few interviews, Jonah chooses subjects he hopes will provide examples of negative cases, teachers who he thinks will not fit the evolving model (purposefully sampling). The first few interviews, for example, were all done with teachers born and raised in the city in which they were working. He suspects that mobile teachers have different career patterns and define effectiveness differently. Jonah purposely seeks out mobile teachers to test his theory. He proceeds in this manner, picking new subjects, enlarging the theory, until he no longer comes across any case that does not fit the theory. At the conclusion of the study, he has a theory about effective teachers. (pp. 66–67)

Note: From *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (pp. 66–67) by R. C. Bogdan and S. K. Biklen, 1982, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc. Copyright 1982 by Allyn & Bacon. Reprinted by permission.

The analytic induction strategy represents a method of thinking about and working with the data. It provides researchers a procedure to disprove hypotheses, yet take into account the apparent strength of the initially formulated hypotheses by incorporating their strengths and revising them into new hypotheses by systematically studying the negative evidence that is accumulated. Analytic induction also provides a direct means for bringing theory and research evidence together, since as research continues any theory formulated becomes more representative of reality. One major disadvantage is that economic and time considerations can limit the study of hypotheses and theories by means of an analytic induction strategy.

Another strategy recognized in qualitative research is referred to as *constant comparative* (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Like the analytic induction strategy, the constant comparative strategy also focuses on the development and refinement of theory. However, unlike the analytic induction strategy, there tends to be no specific hypothesis developed early in the investigation to serve as a base for modification. Instead, data from a number of cases are collected first and then categories, patterns, consistencies, and inconsistencies in the data are analyzed to build a pattern of relationships that evolve into a theory. That is, in the analytic induction strategy a tentative hypothesis or theory is quickly developed and subsequently expanded and modified as greater detail is gained from a number of cases; however, in the constant comparative strategy a wide variety of particulars are first determined from a number of cases and then subsequently synthesized to construct a theory.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) and Taylor and Bogdan (1984) have outlined the process inherent in the constant comparison strategy in the following steps:

1. Collect data on your topic of interest from a number of cases.
2. Look for key issues and/or recurrent events in the data that become categories for focus.
3. Collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus with an eye to seeing the diversity of the dimensions under the categories.
4. Write about the categories you are exploring, attempting to describe and account for all the incidents you have in your data while continually searching for new incidents and, when necessary, formulating new categories and deleting non-usable categories.
5. Work with the data and emerging categories to discover basic patterns and relationships.

6. Continually compare specific incidents in the data, refine the categories, identify their properties, explore their relationships with one another, and integrate them into a coherent theory.

While the constant comparative strategy can be discussed as a series of steps, it should be stressed that it is *not* a series of steps to be implemented in succession. The researcher generally goes back and forth between the steps, sometimes going from final steps back to very early steps and moving forward again until theory emerges from the data.

Example: Constant Comparative Strategy

The following is a hypothetical example developed by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) of how the constant comparative strategy might operate in an investigation.

> Mary Schriver is about to arrive at an elementary school to begin a rather lengthy study using the constant comparative method. While she has no investment in any specific topic, she is interested in teachers, so she decides (and has received permission) to observe in the teachers' lounge. Her plan is to start there and see what emerges. The first day on the site is awkward, but in spite of all the self-conscious introductions and explanations of what she is doing there, she does have a chance to hear many conversations teachers have with each other. She is struck immediately by how much of the talk that goes on is about other people: teachers talk about students, other teachers, and administrators. The tone of the talk varies from humor to anger, and some of the conversations halt when certain people enter the room. The next day, Ms. Schriver returns to the same room and hears more of the same kinds of conversation. She decides to study this talk and she tentatively terms it "gossip." From then on, Mary concentrates her data-collecting activities on incidents of gossip. She tries to get material on the diversity of kinds and types. Although the teachers' lounge is central to her activities, as she gets to know the teachers she leaves the room with them to collect data in other places, both in and out of school. She learns of special places, less conspicuous than the teachers' lounge, where particular teachers meet and talk together. She listens to those conversations.

Continued

Example *Continued*

She begins to examine how people talk about each other only to discover that "gossip" is only one type of a larger category she has come to call "people talk." As she works, her data suggest to her a number of areas for exploration. They include: the members of the school staff who engage in "people talk"; the content of "people talk," for instance, the persons discussed; the levels of intensity of "people talk"; and the behavior that stems from "people talk." As she collects data on these different issues, she begins to delineate other types of "people talk" besides gossip. She begins to see, for example, that certain types of "people talk" only occur between teachers who define themselves as "close." She terms this "friendship people talk." Other types of "people talk" occur in mixed groups—"mixed group people talk." She notes the wide variety of subjects of "people talk": the central office staff, the principal, teachers in friendship groups, teachers not in groups, students who are high achievers, and students who are low achievers. Some of the "people talk" she notices is "bad news people talk" and other is "good news people talk."

Mary examines the data, coding and reworking it in an attempt to see the connections between who talks and what is talked about, in order to understand the dimensions of "people talk." All through this work she writes about what she discovers and attempts to expand her category by drawing models and writing about it. A theory of "people talk" is developing, but it is limited to the one setting. While she has stayed in one school, Mary has located herself in different places in the school, and has talked with different groups to enlarge the number of incidents observed, and to get at new properties and dimensions of the general category "people talk."

As part of Mary's emerging theory she also begins to see that who talks to whom and what is said in regard to "people talk" relates to ongoing patterns of friendship as well as formal hierarchy in the whole school district. After observing in the original school she goes to another, purposely picking one that has recently opened in the same district. The idea behind her choice is that friendship patterns in this new school may differ, providing a good setting to enlarge the emerging theory of "people talk." Similarly, Mary then chooses an open-space private school, which prides itself in its participatory decision-

Continued

Example *Continued*

making structure, as a likely place to collect more incidents of teacher talk to enlarge the theory.

In each of the new sites she chooses, she limits her data collection to incidents related to "people talk," trying to develop new dimensions of the category and working to integrate the new dimensions into the emerging theory, thus enlarging it. Up to this point she has regularly been writing about the data she collects with a mind to working out aspects of the theory of "people talk."

We leave Mary here, but if we continued with her on her research journey we would see her pick new sites to broaden her theory while integrating the new material back into the developing theory. She may go on doing this for as many as forty sites. The decision to stop would be based on her assessing that she has exhausted the dimensions of the categories—the point of "theoretical saturation"—and has developed a theory of "people talk" in schools. (pp. 68–69)

Note: From *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (pp. 68–69) by R. C. Bogdan and S. K. Biklen, 1982, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc. Copyright 1982 by Allyn & Bacon. Reprinted by permission.

Through the use of the constant comparative strategy, the product of an investigation can transcend the purposes of descriptive studies. That is, through the use of the constant comparative strategy (or analytic induction), theories and hypotheses can emerge that may have implications far beyond what a basic description of a situation could provide. However, a major difficulty encountered in the use of the constant comparative strategy is its complexity, requiring considerable strength on the part of the researcher in regard to analytical thinking skills.

Strategy in qualitative research is flexible to meet the unique needs of an investigation. For example, some researchers are not interested in theory development but rather in gaining a thorough description of a program in one school or set of schools. In such an instance, one approach may be for the researcher to follow the initial stages of one of the strategies described above to determine patterns,

categories, and/or relationships that operate, but not necessarily compare and contrast data across a variety of participants and settings or schools in order to develop a hypothesis or theory about the topic, concern, or issue being investigated. In addition, other strategies using different approaches to direct the collection and analysis of qualitative data (e.g., typological, enumerative) have been devised (Goetz & LeCompte, 1982; Henry, 1960; Lofland, 1971). While any one of a number of strategies can be used in qualitative research, some type of well-conceptualized strategy or direction is needed to increase the researcher's probability of achieving credible results.

CONCLUSION

A methodology for qualitative research is developing in the field of education. In this chapter, we have discussed methodological considerations involved in structuring a qualitative research study that researchers in special education may want to consider. In the next chapter, the focus will be on how qualitative researchers collect, record, and analyze their data and how they enhance the understanding of their findings through various collaboration procedures.

4 / Conducting a Qualitative Research Study

With the growing interest in qualitative research in special education, it is important to consider the methodology of this approach. In Chapter 3, methodological considerations involved in structuring a qualitative research investigation were discussed. In this chapter, we discuss some basic methodological considerations involved when conducting a qualitative investigation.

DATA COLLECTION

Generally, any claims of credibility of a qualitative investigation rest on the use of a number of procedures to gather a wide variety of data. Wolcott (1975) has noted that "one's skepticism might be warranted in an inverse ratio to the multiplicity of data collection procedures employed, especially in describing aspects of formal education in a complex society" (p. 121).

Example: Collecting a Variety of Data

Taylor and Bogdan (1980) collected a variety of data in a qualitative study focused on how personnel in institutions for persons with disabilities struggle to defend the goals and purposes of institutions.

> Participant observations [were] focused on ward life [as a primary source of data]. However, semiformal interviews

Continued

Example *Continued*

were conducted with at least one, and usually several, high-ranking officials at each institution. Also we or the student observers toured the institutions with officials before observing ward life . . . .

A second source of data was written documents and materials: brochures, policy statements, memoranda, statistical data, and institutional newsletters. On some occasions, we obtained administrators' written reactions to outside criticism.

Another source was public information: for example, court records and newspaper articles . . . .

Finally, we spent time with administrators and professionals at annual professional conventions, social gatherings, and other meetings. Often these contacts provided our best sources of data on administrators' perspectives. (p. 210)

While a variety of types of data collection procedures are used in qualitative research, the two most common types, participant observation and in-depth interviewing, are discussed here.

Participant Observation

In participant observation, the researcher observes what people do, listens to what they say, and participates in their activities whenever possible. It typically requires the researcher to be "in the presence of others on an ongoing basis and have some nominal status for them as someone who is part of their daily lives" (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979, p. 46). In this capacity, the researcher can study the behaviors and interactions displayed in the natural setting. Evidence and understanding of the naturally occurring variables influencing those under study can be gained, also. The purpose is for the researcher to be able to *describe* in detail the setting that was observed, the activities that took place in the setting, the people who participated in those activities, and the meaning(s) of the activities and setting as perceived by those people being observed.

Example: Participant-Observation

In a study of the everyday decision-making and reasoning processes of 17 persons labeled mildly mentally retarded, Levine and Langness (1985) employed participant-observations.

> We conducted participant-observation research . . . over an 11–month period. Typically, a fieldworker would be introduced to a participant [person labeled retarded] by someone who knew both, and permission would be granted to the fieldworker to accompany the participant during everyday events such as doing the laundry, banking, meal preparation, and shopping . . . [As an example], observations during grocery-buying excursions to the supermarket took the following form. A fieldworker made an appointment with a participant to join him or her on a regular shopping trip at the participant's usual market. Once at the market the participants went about their shopping. The fieldworker followed along, taking notes as appropriate, but also questioning participants about their decision making and reasoning processes. (p. 21)

While the participant observer tries to become a natural, integral part of the setting, he or she also engages in a number of activities that are inherently different from the activities of a natural participant in a setting. According to Dobbert (1982) the participant observer:

1. Systematically seeks out and organizes data concerning what is being studied around a framework of social science theory and methodology rather than focusing only on achieving a situationally defined goal.
2. Keeps detailed records of what occurs, including those things characteristically taken for granted.
3. Periodically detaches self from the situation to review records from the neutral position of a social scientist.
4. Constantly monitors observations and records for evidence of personal bias or prejudice.

In participant observation, the researcher can gather information and data generally unavailable using other data collection procedures. The researcher, by taking some part in the situation, accumulates experiences that can assist in understanding the data

collected as well as the context in which the data were gathered. Similarly, a wide range of in-depth data generally can be collected, because by becoming a part of the situation the researcher ceases to be a stranger, which makes it easier and more comfortable for him or her to gain information and data about the people and setting. The participant observation approach also tends to be less intrusive or disruptive to the natural environment than do many other data collection approaches. However, researchers must exercise particular care in using participant observation. A major concern is that researchers do not get totally involved or go completely "native." That is, there is a danger that the researcher may get so close to the people and involved in their activities that he or she might lose the questioning stance and reflective awareness required of a researcher.

A variety of types of participant observation have been cited by qualitative researchers. The types of participant observation generally identified are tied directly to the researcher's degree of involvement in the setting being studied. Spradley (1980) divides the types of participation into five categories:

1. *Nonparticipation* constitutes the lowest degree of involvement in observation. This type of observation can be done by observing situations on television or videotape. Many qualitative researchers consider it totally outside the realm of true participant observation.
2. *Passive participation* means the researcher is present at the scene of action but does not interact or participate. The researcher finds an observation post and assumes the role of a bystander, spectator, or loiterer. As well as constituting a type of observation in its own right, passive participation is also often perceived as an initial step in gaining greater involvement.
3. *Moderate participation* means that the researcher maintains a balance between being an insider and being an outsider. The researcher observes and participates in some activities, but does not participate fully in all activities.
4. *Active participation* means that the researcher generally does what others in the setting do. While beginning with observation to learn the rules, as they are learned the researcher becomes actively engaged in the activities of the setting. However, the researcher does not go completely native and become a natural participant.
5. *Complete participation* means the researcher is a natural participant. This is the highest level of involvement and usually comes about when the researcher studies something in which he or she is already a natural participant.

While it is sometimes advantageous to increase the degree of involvement in a situation in order to gain an understanding of a participant's perspective, there are potential disadvantages to increased participation that require consideration. The greater the degree to which one is familiar with or acclimated as a natural participant the more difficult it is to maintain the questioning stance and reflective awareness necessary to conduct the study. In addition, when the researcher is completely participating, research activities and inquiries must be done within the social routines and realities of the situation since the social and work expectations of a person as a peer or fellow participant are generally more rigid and demanding than those placed on a person recognized as a researcher, visitor, or learner in a situation. Thus, there is generally less time to engage in research activities.

The third and fourth types are the most conventionally accepted participant observation modes; however, variations using the first, second, and fifth types are not uncommon in the literature. Choosing the type of participant observation to engage in is generally influenced by the goals of the study. Other factors that influence the type of participant observation selected include the opportunity for participation and the degree to which the researcher feels comfortable and has the resources (e.g., time, money) and personal characteristics needed for involvement. Also, as noted by Bogdan and Biklen (1982):

> Exactly what and how much participation varies during the course of the study. During the first few days of participant observation, for example, the researcher often remains somewhat detached, [learning the rules, and] waiting to be looked over and hopefully accepted. As relationships develop, he or she participates more. At later stages of the research, it may be important once again to hold back from participating. (p. 128)

The participant observation data collection procedure is often used in concert with and as a complement to other data collection procedures such as interviewing. When participant observation is used in conjunction with interviewing, the researcher is provided the opportunity to study the relationship between the natural participants' words and their deeds. Through observation the researcher can determine whether what participants say in interviewing reflects the behaviors they actually exhibit in a given situation.

Interviewing

While interviewing is sometimes used as a primary data collection procedure in qualitative research, it is commonly used in con-

junction with participant observation. Interviewing provides the researcher a means to gain a deeper understanding of how the participants interpret a situation or phenomenon than can be gained through observation alone.

The goal in interviewing is to have the participants talk about things of interest to them and to cover matters of importance to the researcher in a way that allows the participants to use their own concepts and terms. To do this, qualitative researchers listen more than they talk and listen with a sympathetic and lively interest (Whyte, 1982).

Interviews in qualitative research are generally unstructured or minimally structured discussions with natural participants. In fact, according to Spradley (1979), qualitative researchers often gather much of their data through participant observation and many casual, friendly conversations. They may interview people without their awareness, merely carrying on a friendly conversation while introducing a few research questions in a natural, nonthreatening manner.

Unstructured or minimally structured interviewing is generally considered by qualitative researchers to be the best way to learn about the perceptions of people. This is based on the assumption that the researcher does not know in advance the relevant questions to ask or how best to word them. In unstructured or minimally structured interviewing, relevant questions are seen to emerge from the interaction process in which the researcher becomes "sensitized" to what is meaningful (Blumer, 1969). When an interview is too rigidly structured the participants or informants cannot "tell their story personally."

Unstructured or informal interviewing can vary from casual discussions while participating in an activity, to open-ended interviews, to in-depth discussions with selected "key informants." In informal interviews, qualitative researchers usually do not have a written list of questions but a repertoire of question-asking strategies used to follow and probe participants' statements. These include responses such as "uh-huh" or a nod of the head to encourage the person to continue talking, reflecting back what the participant just said to encourage talking, or asking for more information on a particular topic (Jacob, 1987).

While the interview in qualitative research can be described as being primarily informal or unstructured, at times the researcher may want to employ more formal, structured interviewing. That is, the researcher may want to make the interview more topic focused or provide guidance in some questions. He or she may have a list of questions or topics to be covered. However, even in such instances, the researcher should remain flexible and be ready to modify or

change questions in order to provide the informants the opportunity to shape the direction of content.

The advantage of increasing the structure in interviewing is a corresponding increase in the probability that comparable data across participants will be collected; however, there is also a corresponding decrease in the probability of gaining an understanding of how each participant him or herself structures the topic under study. It should be noted that a decision regarding structure in interviewing does not need to be a blanket one. Rather, structure may vary during different stages of data collection. For instance, when key participants or informants are being interviewed, questioning might be less structured and more open ended than when ancillary informants are being interviewed to provide complementary or opposing data. Thus, the decision is not one of simply choosing unstructured or structured interviewing. The choice must be based on the goals of the research and the stage the research is currently in, while keeping clearly in mind that "The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms" (Patton, 1980, p. 205).

There are a number of guidelines that the qualitative researcher should be aware of when engaging in interviewing.

1. When information is shared with you, be controlled in your reaction. Being evaluative can result in the informants feeling demeaned if they share views that are offensive or unacceptable to your personal views; this may limit their willingness to provide further information. Similarly, if you express acceptance or agreement with some and not other responses it can be expected that the informants may tend to provide only those responses that they perceive are in accordance with your views. The purpose of the interview is to find out what views people hold; their views should be unbiased by evaluative responses on your part.
2. Choose an interview environment and conditions in which the participants feel comfortable, secure, and at ease enough to speak openly about their point of view. The greater the detail that can be gleaned from the participants the better the chance of revealing the participant's perspectives. In most cases, interviews in qualitative research are conducted in the natural environment as an integral or natural part of whatever is occurring.
3. Avoid presenting "yes" or "no" questions which tend to stifle detail. Encourage the participants to elaborate and share particulars. However, be careful not to interrupt the respondent or change the direction of the conversation.

4. Be flexible in your approach to the informants. Once in a situation, explore and study the informant's manner to determine what approach might be most appropriate in obtaining the most information. Exactly how you interview any particular informant will probably be based on his or her age, topic being discussed, job role, and/or the characteristics you share with the participant.
5. Group interviewing can be useful, particularly in initial interviews. In group interviewing informants are brought together and encouraged to discuss a topic of common interest to them. Informants can stimulate each other to share information and detail. Group interviews also may make the interview situation less "strange" for interviewees and thus less of a strain. However, care must be taken in such interviews to get the group started on the topic of concern and to control individuals who tend to dominate the session.
6. A final consideration is the degree to which interview questioning is "recursive." Recursion refers to the extent to which what is done has been generated from preceding information. As applied to interviewing, what has been said in an interview is used to determine or define further questioning. That is, information gleaned is used to assist the researcher in determining what further questioning might expand and deepen the knowledge base. Making the interview recursive "allows the researcher to treat people and situations as unique and to alter the research [questions] in light of information fed back during the research process itself" (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979, p. 45). The concept of recursion is consistent with the exploratory, discovery orientation of qualitative research.

Example: Recursive Interviewing

The recursive nature of interviewing in qualitative research can be seen in an interview conducted by Simons (1981) with a small group of students concerning whether a particular type of lesson format (discussion) helped shy students.

INTERVIEWER: Does the lesson help the shy ones or does it make them stand out more?

Continued

Example *Continued*

ANGELA: They're so quiet and then all of a sudden one of them'll speak and you think "What's come over them?" I suppose they've got their opinion in their head and they hear everyone else talking so they think they will.

PATRICIA: Carol's quiet.

INTERVIEWER: You're quiet, Carol?

ANGELA: Not as quiet as you used to be.

CAROL: I'm better than I used to be.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't like speaking?

CAROL: I'd only talk when I was asked a question.

ANGELA: Sort of speak when you're spoken to. I noticed that when I first met her, I thought she was quiet.

INTERVIEWER: But now you speak when you want to put in your point of view.

CAROL: Yes. When I think someone's wrong, I'll say what I think.

INTERVIEWER: And how long did it take you to get to this stage?

CAROL: Well, it was more friendly, we sat in a circle and we could speak to each other. That was better and it didn't take long, only a few lessons.

ANGELA: I noticed after three or four lessons Carol started speaking more.

PATRICIA: I spoke the first lesson.

ANGELA: So did I.

CAROL: It gets me mad when people say you're very quiet though. I enjoy other people's views as well.

ANGELA to PATRICIA: Probably the way you shout, you probably frighten them to death. (p. 40)

We have focused on the collection of observational and interview data, since these are among the most commonly collected data in qualitative investigations, yet the most demanding to gather. However, the researcher will probably want to gather more than just observational and interview data. As noted in Chapter 1, school documents and records, diaries, photographs, videotapes, newspaper articles, observation notes of others, case histories, and quantitative research findings are all examples of data a qualitative researcher might gather in order to gain an in-depth or complete picture.

Finally, as noted by Borman, LeCompte, and Goetz (1986), during any data collection process it is generally worthwhile to set aside times for the researcher to detach him or herself from the field. Taking one or more brief vacations from involvement with participants in the field is necessary because "they facilitate both maintenance of perspective so that one does not go native and the capacity for seeing things as if they once again were new and different" (p. 44).

RECORDING METHODS

Recording methods are not needed to collect some of the data often considered important and needed in qualitative research. For example, qualitative researchers sometimes collect already existing materials such as diaries, personal letters, autobiographies, newspaper articles, official documents, files, and photographs.

However, methods for recording data are needed in many instances. Data can be recorded by such means as films, audiotape recordings, and videotape recordings. However, mechanical recording methods can be highly intrusive in the natural setting. In addition, mechanical recording methods do not have the responsiveness and adaptability of a human person who can monitor, change, or adjust focus within a setting. Such methods cannot sense and respond to all the personal and environmental cues that exist in many situations in natural settings in order to grasp the full meaning of what is being heard and/or observed. In general, because of their disadvantages, mechanical recording methods are used by many qualitative researchers only periodically in order to provide additional records or documentation of an event or situation rather than attempting to use them as the primary recording method on a regular basis.

Example: Problems Encountered with Audio Recording

Walker and Adelman (1972) noted that when tape recording in an "open" classroom setting they lost much of the meaning of the material.

> Initially we experimented with sound tape recordings—keeping records over several weeks. These proved interesting in this context because, to a surprising extent they were incomprehensible. We do not mean this in the strictly technical sense of noise and distortion; we could hear the words but for much of the time we could not make complete sense of what was being said. We had previously made similar recordings in more orthodox classrooms and found them quite self-explanatory, even when reduced to transcript, but in this situation we were unable to apply any of the usual techniques of analysis. (pp. 8–9)

The primary way qualitative researchers record the data they collect is through field notes. Field notes are a written record of what the researcher has seen and heard in the field and his or her own feelings, reactions, and thoughts. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), field notes include the following:

> Descriptions of people, events, and conversations as well as the observer's actions, feelings, and hunches or working hypotheses. The sequence and duration of events and conversations are noted as precisely as possible. The fabric of the setting is described in detail. In short, the field notes represent an attempt to record on paper everything that can possibly be recalled. (p. 53)

Field notes also can be viewed as a personal log that helps the researcher to keep track of the development of the investigation, to visualize how the research plan has been affected by the data collected, and to remain self-conscious of how he or she has influenced and been influenced by the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

There are a number of guidelines for recording field notes. Some of the most salient are reviewed here.

Abbreviated Notes Recorded in the Field. Abbreviated or condensed notes are generally recorded in the field at the time of the observation, interview, or other encounter. Condensed rather than detailed notes are taken in order to avoid being intrusive and

to allow the researcher time to participate in, observe, and/or listen to what is happening or being said. The purpose of the condensed notes is to remind the researcher of the setting and the sequence of occurrences, dialogue, and events that transpired. There are several ways to record condensed field notes. When some note taking is tolerable, key words or phrases may be periodically jotted down on a note pad or card as reminders to the researcher. In other instances, researchers jot down or record into a dictaphone brief notes in the field immediately after an observation, interview, or other encounter and before engaging in another session or activity. This is commonly done in situations in which any form of note taking may tend to make the participants or informants uncomfortable with or suspicious of the researcher.

Example: Overt Note Taking in the Field

While generally note taking should be kept to a minimum when in the field, there are situations in which such a practice is not necessary. Rosenhan (1973) points out one of these situations in which several qualitative researchers were checked in as patients into a psychiatric facility.

> [The researchers] spent time writing down their observations about the ward, its patients and the staff. Initially these notes were written "secretly," but as it soon became clear that no one much cared they were subsequently written on standard tablets of paper in such public places as the dayroom. No secret was made of these activities . . . [The researchers] took extensive notes publicly. Under ordinary circumstances, such behavior would have raised questions in the minds of observers [staff] . . . . Indeed it seemed so certain that the notes would elicit suspicion that elaborate precautions were taken to remove them from the ward each day. But the precautions proved needless. The closest any staff member came to questioning these notes occurred when one pseudopatient [researcher] asked his physician what kind of medication he was receiving and began to write down the response. "You needn't write it," he was told gently. "If you have trouble remembering, just ask me again." (pp. 252–253)

Development of More Detailed Notes. The condensed notes are used as a guide in the development of more detailed field notes. Subsequent expansion of condensed field notes into detailed notes should be done as soon as possible after leaving the field. As stated by Dobbert (1982) "never sleep on unamplified material. Full notes should always be written up before the end of the day" (p. 253). We suggest that they be written immediately after leaving the field. As noted by Erickson (1986):

> A fundamental principle is that this subsequent reflection and write-up, which usually takes at least as long as the time spent initially in observation, needs to be completed before returning to the field setting to do further observation. This means that the researcher needs to anticipate spending time writing up notes—a full day's observation in a classroom would need to be followed by a full day's (or night's) period of write-up. Write-up stimulates recall and enables the researcher to add information to that contained in the unelaborated, raw notes. Write-up also stimulates analytic induction and reflection on relevant theory and bodies of research literature. There is no substitute for the reflection during fieldwork that comes from time spent with the original field notes, writing them up in a more complete form, with analytic insights recorded in them. (p. 144)

What Field Notes Should Include. The field notes should include a detailed description of everything that occurred while in the field as well as where and when it occurred. They should include basic information such as the date, place, and time of the events recorded along with who was present and a description of them. Also included should be a description of the physical setting, social interactions occurring, and activities engaged in. In addition, the field notes should include a description of the researcher and his or her dress and actions.

When writing field notes, interpretive words such as "hostile," "effective," or "poor" should be avoided since they are relative and have minimal meaning to a person not present in the field. As noted by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), rather than saying, "The child looked a mess," you might choose something like "The child, who was seven or eight years old, wore faded muddy dungarees with both knees ripped. [He was crying and]. . . his face was streaked clean where he had rubbed it with his wet fingers" (p. 85).

In some cases, the description of a setting can be enhanced by the construction of a representational map. A representational map is a graphic display of the recurrent and stable features of a setting.

More than one map may be necessary when depicting multiple settings or changes in settings over time. When appropriate, the map should depict those objects that are acted upon by the subjects. A representational map serves as a visual aid in further detailing setting data.

Finally, direct quotes from the research subjects should be included in the field notes as much as possible. Quotes from research subjects are often very useful in portraying clearly and accurately their individual perspectives.

Example: Direct Quote

In an investigation by Blase (1986) on sources of teacher stress, the perspective of a teacher was clearly communicated by her own words:

> Teachers are loaded with extra work . . . much of this work doesn't have anything to do with the classroom. I like to do everything the best I can, but with so much to do I can't . . . I feel like a marionnette . . . I have lost confidence in having done a good job in the classroom . . . I feel frustrated, angry, and helpless. (p. 31)

Recording Researcher's Feelings. Field notes should include the researcher's feelings, reactions, insights and interpretations of events as they occurred in the field and as they occur during the writing of the detailed field notes. The researcher should note any of his or her fears, confusions, mistakes, or problems that developed along with speculations, hunches, or impressions. The reflective part of the field notes should be separated or clearly differentiated from the descriptive data. Some researchers recommend that the reflective data be placed in a separate section of the field notes (Denzin, 1978), while others consider a completely separate diary or journal the most appropriate place for such data (Spradley, 1980). However, wherever recorded, the reflective data should be clearly tied to the descriptive data.

Example: Reflective Fieldnotes

Olesen and Whittaker (1968) describe their feelings and interpretations in regard to taking notes in a classroom setting.

> I feel it much easier to write when the students write, and listen when they do; I have noticed when I attempt to write when the students are not, I attract [the teacher's] attention and on a few occasions she seems to falter in what she is saying. (p. 28)

Although the researcher's interpretive comments are essential in data analysis and synthesis, it is important that the researcher also have available a great deal of "low-inference" data to report. That is, much of the data presented in qualitative research reports should consist of concrete, precise, verbatim accounts of what people say and do (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Lofland, 1971; Pelto & Pelto, 1978). While analysis and interpretive comments are essential, it is "those ethnographies rich in primary data that are considered the most credible" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 41).

Allowing Sufficient Recording Time. It is important to allow sufficient time for the recording of field notes. As Lofland (1971) has stated, the field notes and records are the observer's *raison d'etre* (reason for being). Many qualitative researchers believe that if the data gathered is not written down, the researcher might as well not have been in the field. It also should be considered that developing detailed, quality field notes is a rigorous and demanding job which requires considerable "personal discipline and time." One hour of fieldwork may require as much as three to four hours or more of time to develop the field notes. A researcher cannot afford to put off or gloss over field notes if a quality piece of research is to be produced.

Recording Data on Various Media. Finally, data can be recorded on a number of media. Use of a bound notebook to record data is common; however, many researchers use a clipboard adding individual pages as needed. Another commonly used medium is an index card. Organization of field note recording is also an important element, involving coding for easy access, analysis, and sequencing. Pages or cards should be numbered in chronological order, filed, and

coded so critical elements in the data pool can be quickly located. Another practical suggestion is for the researcher to keep multiple copies of his or her data to guard against possible loss. Without the data records, the usefulness of an investigation can be practically nullified.

DATA ORGANIZATION AND ANALYSIS

In most qualitative research studies, as the study progresses, the researcher accumulates a great deal of data (e.g. interview transcripts, diaries, memos, newspaper articles, official records). As various types of data are collected and fieldnotes are developed, a critical element in the facilitation of analysis is the organization of the accumulating data. In most instances, the researcher maintains the data collected according to the temporal sequence of events that occurred throughout the investigation. That is, a "running record" of data is maintained with further organizational arrangements being developed from the basic running record.

Organizing by Categories

Organizational arrangements of data are generally focused around categories relevant to an investigation. Some researchers may predefine their categories according to their theories or to findings from previous investigations; however, if a naturalistic paradigm is followed, categories should emerge from the data. Sometimes categories for data organization are fairly obvious, but at other times potential categories only begin to emerge from the data after the researcher has read and reread all of the data on a number of occasions.

Categories may be arranged according to such concerns as groupings of people, settings, activities, administrative structures, curricular areas, or anything else that appears indicated by the data and/or area under study. For example, Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls (1986) organized some of the data in their study on labeling handicapped students in the public schools around the following categories: classroom behavior, educational testing situations, and placement committee hearings. More than one set of categories may be utilized and a single data segment may fit into more than one category.

It should also be noted that these categories need not necessarily remain static. They are likely to change or undergo modification as changes are indicated from the ongoing data collection. This potential for changing categories should be taken into account when choosing a method to organize your data.

Sorting: Coding the Data. After determining possible categories for data organization, you will need to sort the data into the various categories. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have outlined several commonly used methods for organizing data into categories. The first is referred to as *coding the data.* Segments of data within the running record are assigned to the categories with markings and comments regarding the categorical assignment being made in the margins directly on the running record. For example, you might simply make a note such as "fits under classroom organization" beside a data segment. The advantages of this approach are that it can be done relatively quickly and the data remains within the context of its occurrence. However, the retrieval of data for any given category for study or comparison purposes is time consuming and somewhat awkward.

The Analytical Index. Another organizational method is the use of an *analytical index.* In this approach each data segment within the total running record is assigned an identifying mark such as a number, or letter, or a combination of the two. For example, I2 may refer to the second (2) interview (I) sequence in the running record, or PO4A may refer to the first segment (A) of participant observation (PO) for observation number four (4). Subsequently, a list of code numbers and/or letters can be placed under each category. In this way, you can easily locate information in your data about any particular category. As previously noted, data segments or sequences can be assigned to more than one category, and categories may change as further data are collected. The advantage of the analytic index method is that data segment location and retrieval is quicker and easier than when simply coding the record; however, an analytic index does take more time and effort to develop.

Physical Sorting. Another method used to organize data is *physical sorting.* In physical sorting, multiple copies of running records are made. The running record is then cut up to provide several copies of each segment of the data. Subsequently, a copy of each data segment is filed under any category in which the data segment could potentially be relevant. Advantages of physical sorting are that all data segments relevant to a category are readily available, and items within or across categories can be studied side by side. The disadvantage is that in most investigations there are large amounts of data; thus, the physical sorting approach can be expensive and time consuming and can require considerable storage space for organization.

Use of Microcomputers. Other more sophisticated methods of data organization have also been suggested. One involves the use of

microcomputers. Through assigning codes to the various data segments and categories, retrieval of relevant data segments can be retrieved quickly by categories. (See Drass, 1980, for a more in-depth discussion of this procedure.) The advantages of increasingly sophisticated methods of data organization include the ease of coding, storage, and data retrieval. However, a primary disadvantage, beyond the expense of the equipment involved, is that the researcher could potentially lose the depth of understanding fostered by less sophisticated methods. That is, the researcher tends to spend less time studying, organizing, sifting through, and generally handling and familiarizing him or herself with the data in its natural sequence, as often occurs when using less sophisticated methods. But this does not mean that computers cannot be helpful in qualitative research data organization and analysis.

Data Analysis

As you are involved in data organization, you are also involved in data analysis. In fact, data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing activity that occurs throughout the investigative process rather than after the process, as is generally the case in quantitative research. As noted by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), data collection, organization, and analysis occur in a pulsating fashion—first the data collection and organization, then the analysis, more data collection and organization, and then more analysis and so on—until the research is completed. It is this pulsating or ongoing nature of data collection, organization, and analysis throughout the study that allows its direction to be influenced by the data gathered from the field as the study proceeds.

Data analysis in qualitative research involves organization, classification, categorization, search for patterns, and synthesis as well as determination of missing information requiring further search to achieve an in-depth, holistic understanding about a topic of concern. As data are collected from the field, generally they are organized into manageable units and/or synthesized into other available information in an attempt to define and/or refine research findings. That is, qualitative research findings are "fleshed out" as additional data are obtained and systematically integrated into the available existing body of information. The purpose of this type of analysis is to develop a greater depth of understanding from what is available and to direct the researcher in regard to other relevant data that could potentially contribute to the knowledge base regarding the topic under study. Thus, the analysis is *recursive;* that is, the findings are generated and systematically built as successive pieces of data are gathered.

Analytical techniques or strategies used to guide data collection, organization, and analysis have been described repeatedly in the literature (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The most common and most consistent with the underlying tenets of qualitative research are the analytic inductive and constant comparative approaches. These two strategies were described in detail in Chapter 3. Other approaches to analysis have also been suggested. These include (a) typological analysis in which typologies are devised based on a theory or initial set of data and then applied to a new set of data, (b) enumerative systems in which quantitative frequency counts are applied to the typological analysis, and (c) standardized observational protocols in which predefined categories are developed before the investigation and field data are coded into these categories. Although such analytical strategies have been used in qualitative studies they are more typical of conventional studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For readers interested in more information on these three analysis procedures, see Goetz and LeCompte (1982).

A number of data analysis levels can be defined. The initial level of analysis occurs while the researcher is in the fieldwork setting gathering data. In the field, a researcher gains impressions and begins to recognize relationships, patterns, commonalities, and differences in various aspects of the data; hunches and ideas often begin to emerge. While this level generally constitutes only a basic stage of analytic understanding of the data from the field it is critical in that it generally forms the underpinnings of the analytic levels to follow.

A second level of analysis occurs when the researcher sits down to organize and develop the variety of data collected in the field, as in the case of developing the condensed notes collected in the field into detailed field notes. During this stage, the researcher is involved in analyzing such things as the logic and correspondence of the data to the initial impressions formed in the field as well as the organization and categorization of the data. Also, at this level of analysis, data that support or do not support emerging patterns, relationships, concepts, and hypotheses begin to become focused.

A third level of analysis occurs periodically throughout the investigation when the researcher carefully and thoroughly reads, rereads, and studies all the accumulated notes and materials collected. At these times the researcher systematically seeks out similarities, differences, correspondence, categories, themes, concepts, and ideas and analyzes the logic of previous analytic outcomes, categorical organization, and weaknesses or gaps in the data that require attention. Along with studying the accumulated material in a holistic fashion (i.e., looking at it all together as a collective picture), this analytic level also provides the researcher

the opportunity to engage in a form of evaluation analysis that Dobbert (1982) considers to be possibly the most overlooked critical procedure in the analytic process. It involves identifying inadequate field notes and data analysis that require upgrading. Studying the qualitative material collected for omissions, insights, mistakes, or problems in logic can result in revision of available material along with determination of what further work in the field and further analysis needs to be done.

Throughout all these levels of analysis, the researcher gradually generates assertions from the emerging hunches, concepts, ideas, and hypotheses. Assertions are key statements that positively and plainly affirm what the researcher has discovered or come to believe, based on the analysis of the data. As noted by Erickson (1986), "One basic task of data analysis is to generate assertions" (p. 147). The following is an example of an assertion that might be made in a mainstreaming study: Most of the regular classroom teachers involved in this study geared their instruction to whatever happened to be the "average" or "normal" capabilities of their students. Only one or two assertions or a dozen or more might be generated, depending on the complexity of whatever is being investigated and the data gathered. The researcher, of course, has the responsibility to provide the reader with the data available to support any assertions made. How this is done is explained in Chapter 4.

As soon as the assertion(s) are made, the researcher conducts a systematic search of all the data, looking for disconfirming and confirming evidence, keeping in mind the need, if necessary, to modify the assertions as the analysis proceeds. According to Erickson (1986), the researcher constantly asks him or herself questions such as the following: (a) Is there too little evidence to warrant the assertion(s) made?; (b) Is there a range of evidence across different kinds of sources (e.g. direct observation, interviewing, site documents) to warrant the assertions?; (c) Were there additional subjects and/or settings or times of the day or week that could have been studied that might have provided additional evidence?; (d) Did I spend enough time in the field to understand the complexity of the data related to the assertion(s)?; (e) As hypotheses were developed and assertions made, did I search for disconfirming evidence while in the field?; (f) Is there any contradictory evidence that would point to the need to modify or discard the assertion(s) made?; (g) Have I been careful not to too quickly discard any assertions that only needed to be modified or for which additional data might confirm their plausibility?

Although by the end of many qualitative investigations the initial analysis of all the data typically has been completed, additional

post hoc level analyses are recommended to further strengthen the credibility of the findings derived (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). It is in the post hoc analysis that the researcher has the opportunity to break away from the intense involvement in the data collection and analysis and distance him or herself from the data so a fresh perspective can be brought to the analytic process. It has been suggested that the researcher examine the data after being away from the study a month or more to determine their relation to the obtained findings (Scriven, 1974). Other such procedures involve the submission of findings to the participants or informants for their reaction and the analysis and evaluation of the investigation's methods and its finding(s) through peer review once the final report is made available to other professionals in the discipline.

The following are a number of suggestions for organizing and analyzing data collected in qualitative investigations.

1. Always consider the context in which the data were collected. For example, when were the data gathered (hour, day, month) and what were the physical dimensions and social characteristics operating in the research setting and community at large at that time.
2. When looking for patterns, categories, concepts, or themes in qualitative data consider words, phases, patterns of behavior, ideas, and hunches that tend to reoccur or appear throughout the data.
3. Develop and continue to revise classification schemes to be used as a basis for organizing and understanding the qualitative data. What parts of your data appear to share common characteristics or seem to fit together?
4. It is essential to consider how the participants categorize and classify the phenomena under study when generating the classification scheme. After all, it is the participants' perceptions that are critical.
5. Develop concepts, hypotheses, generalizations, and/or theories from the data by determining similarities and relationships in various pieces of the data and comparing and contrasting consistently occurring themes and categories.
6. Consider all data that seems *not* to support an emerging theme, idea, or hypothesis as well as data that tends to be supportive. Do *not* selectively consider data. Also, be sure that your hunches, ideas, hypotheses, and theories fit the data. Do not try to force the data to fit your hunches, ideas, and hypotheses. In this regard, Williams (1986) has noted that you should neither ignore nor conceal contradictions in the data. Rather you should actively

locate contradictions and incorporate them into the whole fabric of the analysis, or, at the very least, acknowledge contradictions as paradoxes of the phenomenon under study.

7. Record not only the impressions, interpretations, assertions, and conclusions drawn from your data but also a clear description of the logical progression or sequence used in conducting the analysis. This information can be helpful to both the researcher and colleagues in understanding and evaluating the findings of the investigation.
8. Along with reviewing and studying data from the investigation being conducted, also seek out and consider data and findings available in the literature from related investigations. Such added information may result in the recognition of ideas, similarities, and differences that can provide a greater depth of understanding than otherwise possible. In addition, seek commentary on the data from other reseachers, mentors, and colleagues as an aid in clarifying and developing ideas, concepts, and hypotheses. The insights of others can sometimes be invaluable when analyzing data.
9. Do not hesitate to speculate and formulate ideas, concepts, hypotheses, and assertions.

   > The lack of confidence one usually feels on the first research attempts often makes one too cautious about forming ideas. Worries about getting details and facts straight can hold a researcher down. We do not suggest that the facts and the details are not important, for ideas *must* be grounded in the data, but they are a means to clear thinking and to generating ideas, not *the end*. As C. Wright Mills reminded us, "Facts discipline reason; but reason is the advance guard in any field of learning" (Mills, 1959, p. 205). Barney Glaser, a central figure in the development of qualitative analysis, tells us that good ideas contribute the most to the science of human behavior. "Findings are soon forgotten, but not ideas." (Glaser, 1978, p. 8). (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 154)

Data analysis is critical to the qualitative research process. It is through recognition, study, and understanding of the interrelationships and concepts in your data that hypotheses and assertions can be developed and evaluated. The data analysis outlined in this section, when used in conjunction with a research strategy such as the analytic induction or constant comparative outlined in Chapter 3, can provide the researcher with an approach to developing hypotheses, assertions, and theories. Such analysis also can assist the researcher in gaining an understanding of people's perceptions and/or in developing in-depth and holistic descriptions of whatever he or she is investigating.

There are no guidelines in qualitative research for determining how much data and data analysis are necessary to support an assertion, conclusion, or theory. This is always a judgment call. Also, qualitative researchers seldom claim that their interpretations have been proven. As noted by Taylor and Bodgan (1984), qualitative researchers can demonstrate plausible support for their claims but rarely, if ever, truly prove them.

Finally, it should be noted that a small but growing constituency of qualitative researchers have advocated a return to the tenets of analysis suggested in the traditional Chicago School of qualitative or ethnographic research. Their position is frequently refered to as "critical ethnography." As perceived by advocates of critical ethnography, many current researchers are implementing qualitative research methods to produce detailed descriptions and interpretations of what exists in a particular situation at a particular point in time. They are not, however, analyzing their data to contribute a deeper critical assessment of the cultural and social phenomenon under investigation. According to critical ethnographers, the original intent of ethnographic study was to extend or broaden our understanding of cultural and social situations; the absence, in many studies, of any attempt at critical analysis of the data has defeated this purpose to at least some degree.

Critical ethnographers advocate analysis of data in regard to historical and contemporary social and institutional structures, ideologies, and theories that surround and potentially impinge upon the specific setting, situation, and topic under investigation. For example, in an investigation by Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls (1986) of how students are referred, classified as handicapped, and placed in special education, the researchers analyzed their data in regard to how what they were studying (i.e. referral, classification, placement) was influenced by "the bureaucratic institution of the school and the society of which the school is a part" (p. 47). They also looked at their data in regard to several theories such as social stratification theory, which focuses on the role schooling plays in later life economic and social outcomes. Knowledge of and/or information and data concerning the historical and contemporary social structures, theories, and ideologies surrounding whatever is being studied must be available in order to be able to analyze the data in this manner.

For many educators and researchers, critical analysis means taking a critical, questioning stance regarding data about present-day social/cultural perspectives, assumptions, and practices. Researchers employing a critical perspective often, for example, analyze their data through proposing a series of questions such as:

1. What historical, theoretical, and philosophical factors have shaped the current cultural and social practices observed?
2. Which individuals or groups tend to control the social/cultural practices?
3. Who reaps the advantages and disadvantages of current arrangements?
4. What social, ideological, political, and institutional structures tend to reinforce and perpetuate current practices?
5. Which perspectives or viewpoints of participants tend to create what types of social/cultural standards and practices?
6. Would there be any advantages to changing current practices from the participants' perspectives and/or from various philosophical, ideological, or moral principles?
7. What changes would benefit which individuals or groups in the cultural/social setting studied?

In summary, through critical analysis the researcher tries to determine how the particular social and cultural phenomenon under study was produced, how it influences, and how it is influenced by surrounding social structures, ideologies, and theories. This could help researchers gain insight into why things are the way they are, what changes are taking place, and how change could or is likely to occur in the future. The reader is referred to Angus (1986) and Thomas (1983) for more discussion of "critical ethnography."

CORROBORATION

Considerable attention and importance has been focused on the corroboration of qualitative research findings. It should be noted that the purpose of corroboration is *not* to confirm whether people's perceptions are accurate or "true" reflections of a situation but rather to help ensure that the research findings accurately reflect people's perceptions, whatever they may be. As noted by Taylor and Bogdan (1984), "what the qualitative researcher is interested in is not truth per se, but rather perspectives" (p. 98). Thus, rather than trying to determine the "truth" of people's perceptions, the purpose of corroboration is to help researchers increase their understanding and the probability that their findings will be seen as credible or worthy of consideration by others.

Triangulation

One process involved in corroboration efforts has become known as *triangulation.* As explained by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), "Triangulation is not the combination of different kinds of data *per se,* but rather an attempt to relate different sorts of data" (p. 199). The aim is *not* to determine the truth about some social phenomenon or cancel out bias in any one research method or data source. Rather the purpose of triangulation is to increase one's understanding of whatever is being investigated. As pointed out by Mathison (1988): "The value of triangulation lies in providing evidence—whether convergent, inconsistent, or contradictory—such that the researcher can construct good explanations of the social phenomena under study" (p. 15).

Denzin (1978) has identified several types of triangulation. One is triangulation of data sources which involves, when appropriate, the convergence of multiple data sources. It could involve, for example, data collected from a variety of participants, in a variety of settings under a variety of conditions. For instance, if a researcher wants to study the perceptions of teachers in general toward mainstreaming in a large school district, he or she may want to collect data from a variety of teachers at a variety of schools and grade levels to gain a clear understanding of what teachers in general think about mainstreaming in the school district. Studying the perceptions of only one or two teachers may not be sufficient. However, it should be noted that there is nothing really wrong with studying the perceptions of one or two people, if you are interested *only* in their particular perceptions.

Another triangulation procedure is methodological triangulation, which involves the convergence of data from multiple data collection procedures. As previously noted, using a variety of data collection procedures in concert is a "hallmark" of qualitative research. Thus, when feasible a researcher may want to, for example, employ participant observation, interviewing, and document analysis to increase his or her understanding. As noted by Patton (1980), a comprehensive fieldwork endeavor rarely involves using a single method or technique. Rather the investigator generally observes, talks with the participants, and reviews program records and documents to gain an understanding of whatever is being investigated. Used in isolation, observations, interviews, and document analysis may not always provide an in-depth and thorough understanding. By using such data collection procedures in concert the investigator "can build on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimizing the weaknesses in any single approach" (Patton, 1980, p. 158).

Example: Methodological Triangulation

In an investigation of teachers' reactions to deviant acts, Hargreaves, Hesler, and Mellor (1975) used direct observations and interviewing to enhance their understanding.

> Our principal method was to observe a lesson and from these observations to extract those teacher statements and/or actions which consisted of a reaction to a deviant act. We then reported the reaction back to the teacher at a later stage, asking for his commentary upon what he did . . . we often merely quoted what the teacher had said, and the teacher was willing to make a commentary upon his action without any direct question from us. On other occasions we reported the teacher's statement back and then asked why the teacher had said or done something. (p. 219)

Investigator triangulation is another triangulation procedure identified by Denzin (1978). In investigator triangulation, generally multiple researchers are involved in an investigation. Two or more researchers team up in the collection, inspection, and analysis of data. Triangulating observations, interviews, and analyses can help reduce the potential bias that may result from a single investigator working alone. Rather than using other investigators, a common alternative is to use participant or informant assistance for corroboration. For example, informants have been used to confirm the accuracy of a researcher's field notes from a session by keeping their own set of notes for later comparison with the researcher's field notes or simply reacting to material collected by the researcher over time (Wolcott, 1975). Such researcher-participant corroboration has also been referred to by some researchers as cross-examination (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Tymitz & Wolf, 1977).

While the triangulation procedures discussed thus far have much to commend them, they also present problems. As noted in the analysis section, what a researcher obtains from participant-observations or interviews often depends, among other things, on the particular context operating and the unique relationship developed between the researcher and informants as well as the researcher's own personality, background, and biases. Thus one should not always expect the same research techniques or data to

emerge from, for example, two different researchers (investigator triangulation) or through other triangulation procedures. However, this does not mean that researchers should not try to triangulate data to increase their understanding and the credibility of their findings. It should be remembered that even having different data from different investigators, sources, and methods can in some cases enhance one's understanding. Differences found among data sets can be just as important and illuminating as similarities. However, the researcher or researchers should seek out consistent patterns and reasonable explanations for differences across data. Despite its limitations, "triangulation is a process by which the researcher can help guard against the accusation that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single data source, or a single investigator's bias" (Patton, 1980, p. 332).

Additional Procedures

There are ways of improving one's understanding and/or the credibility of a study other than using one or more of the triangulation procedures identified by Denzin (1978). While these also have limitations, they can be helpful. A recently developed procedure that is gaining popularity for increasing credibility is referred to as a *research* or *inquiry audit* (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Halpern, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research audit is very similar in concept and procedure to the fiscal audit used in banking and other businesses.

When auditing is employed in qualitative research, an "auditor" is engaged to examine the fairness of the research process employed in an investigation and the accuracy of the product in terms of internal coherence and support by the data. Critical in this process is the quality of the "audit" trail, that is, the thoroughness and accuracy of the records. Involvement of an auditor from the early stages of the investigation is usually worthwhile to ensure the development of an audit trail that is adequate for evaluation. The auditor should not be a friend or close colleague. She or he should be a disinterested person who is well trained in research and whose integrity is well known and respected.

Peer debriefing is another procedure. It can be employed to help the researcher gain a better understanding as well as help ensure the credibility of qualitative research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It requires exposing one's research process and data to an uninvolved peer. Debriefing can occur anytime during the research process and/or after the research is completed. Debriefing helps keep the researcher "honest," exposing him or her to searching questions by a fellow researcher doing his or her best to play the devil's advocate. Biases are probed, meanings explored, and the

basis for interpretations clarified. The debriefer should be someone who knows a great deal about the substantive area of the inquiry and the methodological issues involved in qualitative research.

Qualitative researchers have a long history of making "use of outside referees among colleagues and other field-workers both directly, in discussions that seek clarification or rebuttal of emerging constructs and interpretation, and indirectly, through use of similar or related research literature to provide a comparative perspective" (Borman, LeCompte, & Goetz, 1986). When alternative interpretations or unresolved issues emerge they are (or should be) seriously considered and presented in qualitative research reports.

Yet another procedure for corroboration or enhancement of credibility is to go back to the field and seek negative cases or evidence that might disconfirm interpretations or assertions made during data analysis. By seeking but not finding negative evidence, the researcher tends to bolster or corroborate his or her findings. Negative evidence would of course, lead to a reanalysis of the data.

Finally, it should be stressed that qualitative research is based on the notion that in-depth understanding and a holistic and contextual perspective is gained from long-term involvement in the field by a well-trained researcher. There are no corroboration or triangulation procedures that can substitute or correct for not spending the time and effort necessary to gain a clear understanding or produce a credible study.

CONCLUSION

While qualitative research is gaining increased recognition in special education, it cannot be conducted haphazardly if credible results are to be produced. Thus, it is important for those of us in special education to become aware of the theory and methodology of qualitative research.

As in quantitative research, a number of methodological decisions must be made when conducting qualitative research. In contrast to quantitative research, however, in qualitative research methodological decisions are made throughout rather than before the investigation. As noted in Chapter 3, the qualitative researcher usually enters the investigation with only a notion of what he or she wants to study. Hypotheses, subjects, design, procedures, and data collection methods evolve and take focus as the study progresses. Such decisions are guided by the data after the study is under way. In this manner the researcher increases his or her probabilities of focusing on the most relevant questions and using the most appropriate methods.

The decision making process in ongoing method selection is not "clear-cut." As in any research, there is no definitive accepted method(s) for all circumstances and conditions. Rather, decisions must be made by the researcher given the direction of the study, conditions, or data desired from the investigation. As stated by Homans (1962):

> There are neither good nor bad methods, but only methods that are more or less effective under particular circumstances in reaching objectives on the way to a distant goal. (p. 257)

Finally, the authors would like to reiterate the theme they have attempted to convey throughout this and the preceding chapter. Qualitative research is *not* an unstructured, unsystematic, haphazard, or sloppy approach to research. There is structure and there are specific research strategies and data collection procedures involved. The general approach is, however, flexible, allowing for modifications of the structure and data collection procedures as deemed necessary based on the data being collected. Highly systematic, consistent attention to and analysis of the data as they are being collected is needed to guide the qualitative research study. Thus, qualitative research gains and, as needed, alters its structure as data from the field indicates what is needed. In this way, the specific research questions asked and methods employed are grounded on data from the "real" world.

5 / Reporting Qualitative Research Findings

A study's purpose, characteristics, and collected data should be considered when deciding on the form and content of the written report. The particulars of any report of research findings cannot be predetermined, just as the particulars of the qualitative investigation itself cannot be predetermined. However, it is important to consider others' reports of qualitative research findings and the ideas of various researchers and writers about how best to report findings.

While research findings can be reported through oral presentations, videotapes, films, and other methods, this chapter addresses what is probably the most popular way of presenting research findings—that is, the writing of manuscripts such as articles and books. In this Chapter, the authors discuss: (a) the contents of a written report, (b) organizing the text of the report, (c) writing the report, and (d) dissemination of the report.

CONTENTS OF A WRITTEN REPORT

The contents of a written report are based primarily on the researcher's purposes, findings obtained, and methods used. The style of writing can also have an influence. Writing style for qualitative reporting can be divided into three general types: journalistic, portrait writing/storytelling, and academic/research. The journalistic style tends to highlight interesting findings in a concise form to a general audience. Portrait writing involves "drawing a portrait with words" to provide a personalized, empathetic understanding of the situation. These two styles are most often used by those who follow the "artistic" approach to qualitative research that was described in Chapter 2. The academic or research style is designed to contribute new data to the field in a well-substantiated way and to be open to scrutiny by colleagues.

Most professional/scientific journals are not yet receptive to the portrait writing/storytelling or journalistic style of report writing, although this may change somewhat in the not too distant future (see the lead article in *American Educational Research Journal,*

Smith, 1987). At the present time, most qualitative researchers tend to engage in more academic or scholarly oriented report writing. Thus, the focus here is on the writing of reports of a more academic or research nature. Such report writing should be, as noted by Patton (1980), free from unnecessary academic jargon. It should be the data in a report that impresses the reader rather than the academic jargon used by the researcher.

Focus and Background Information

A concise statement about the *professional background and interests* of the researcher helps the reader to understand the researcher's perspective. This is generally included as a part of the "author identification information" that accompanies most research reports but probably is or should be a little more thorough in qualitative research reports. The perspective of the researcher(s) can be helpful in understanding the decision-making processes and interpretations of the data.

A critical element in any research report is a clear statement of the *focus* or *purpose* of the investigation. In order to set the stage for the reader, the *title* of the report should reflect the focus. Then, generally in the introduction, this focus should be expanded and clarified.

The way in which the focus of the investigation is approached sets the stage for the rest of the manuscript. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have identified five ways researchers can set the focus of a research report:

1. Propose a thesis to be defended.
2. Present a theme or general idea to be explored or discussed.
3. Identify a topic or particular unit of a situation to be considered.
4. Address the usefulness or usability of a concept in the field.
5. Present a question to be answered.

General background information is typically needed to help clarify the study's focus for the reader. Background information can be provided by briefly reviewing the professional literature or summarizing the current theories, concern, or debate in the field related to the focus of the investigation. This can be done either before or after formally stating the focus.

Finally, a brief overview of how the research report is organized provides the reader with background information to understand and follow the logic of the report more fully. Usually, this is done at the end of the introduction, as was done in this chapter.

Methodology

A clear, accurate and complete description of the methods used is important to the reader's understanding of the research findings. When the methodology is fully described the reader is in a position to critically analyze the applicability and implications of the methods used to address the purpose of the investigation. As stated by Taylor and Bogdan (1984):

> There is a tendency among many qualitative researchers to gloss over the specifics of their methodology. When we read these studies, we have no way of knowing whether the findings came from cultural knowledge, prior theoretical frameworks, direct personal experience, or actual fieldwork and interviewing (and if so, what kind of fieldwork or interviewing). Hence we do not know how to judge the credibility and validity of the researcher's account. (p. 150)

Generally, the longer the report—whether an article, monograph, or book—the greater the methodological detail which can be provided. However, regardless of the length, the following constitute important methodological concerns that can contribute to reader understanding.

The *site(s), setting(s)* and *participant(s)* should be described. Understanding any research involves knowing with whom and in what situation a topic or phenomenon was investigated. Also, the number of sites, settings, and participants involved brings an added dimension to the understanding and potential credibility of any findings. *When* a study was conducted is also important to understanding the findings. Societal aspects are dynamic and when a study was conducted can potentially influence the results obtained. People's actions, opinions, and attitudes are often influenced by the current prevailing political, economic, and social trends. Likewise, the *length of time* spent investigating a topic can provide the reader further insight into the depth of study involved in obtaining the findings.

It should be stressed that detailed descriptions of sites and settings, as well as participants, are essential in qualitative research reports. As noted by Williams (1986):

> Reports should include presentation of "thick" raw descriptions and contextual background. Understanding the object of study in its naturally occurring context is a hallmark of qualitative research . . . . The report should provide the reader with a vicarious experience as a member in the setting studied. The reader should gain enough insight through reading a naturalistic report to be able to anticipate and interpret occurrences in the settings. (pp. 91–92).

Also important is an explanation and outline of *the theoretical framework guiding the study.* In addition, a clear description of the *thoughts and perceptions of the researcher* during the initial stages of the study and any changes and modifications that occurred as the study was conducted and the data analyzed should be included. The thoughts and perspectives of the researcher can be among the most important information the reader can have when analyzing and interpreting the findings of a research report. Likewise, a description of the decision-making processes used by the researcher in directing the research can provide the reader with insights regarding the findings.

The *role* the researcher assumed and *how the participants reacted* to him or her should be described. A full description of the researcher including physical, social, and educational characteristics can provide added insights. The perceptions of the participants concerning the researcher can influence the information shared and/or behaviors exhibited.

The research techniques employed to *enter the field, select participants,* and *collect and record data* are also critical to understanding the findings and interpretations made. Similarly, the reader should know the *nature of the data* collected, such as interview, observation, documents, or photographs. Finally, any *corroborative procedures* used to enhance the depth and breadth of the findings and the understandings and interpretations of the researcher should be reported, along with any other information that could be useful in helping the reader evaluate the soundness of the procedures and the nature of the findings.

Findings

The *descriptions, analyses,* and *interpretations* of the data collected have been referred to as the heart or core of the research report. While other sections are critical to the understanding of these findings, it is the findings themselves that give meaning and value to the report.

A balance of descriptions, analyses, and interpretations should be maintained. As noted by Patton (1980), the descriptions presented should be sufficient to allow the reader to understand the analyses and interpretations. (That is, ground the abstract to the concrete.) In turn, the analyses and interpretations need to be sufficient to allow the reader to understand the descriptions. (The abstract should reflect and expand understanding of the concrete.) Further, the researcher should assist the reader to sort out strengths and weaknesses inherent in the analyses and interpretations presented through such phrases as "strongly supported by the data" or "weak pattern." The researcher also needs to *identify* for

the reader why and how the analyses and interpretations were made and the way *key concepts* in the analyses evolved.

In addition, it is the researcher's responsibility to inform the reader of any *unexpected findings or patterns* that emerged from the data and to report a range of *evidence* to support assertions or interpretations presented. Descriptive, low inference data such as direct quotes from respondents and vignettes based on field notes, diaries, and other documents that portray events in everyday life can be used to support interpretations and assertions.

Erickson (1986) states that in regard to findings qualitative research reports should contain at least three basic types of information: particular description, general description, and interpretative commentary. *Particular description* involves reporting polished versions of what is in the field notes and/or other documents and materials. For example, the actions of the participants, their comments during observations, and the setting conditions should be described in detail, along with direct quotes recorded during interviews. That is, the focus is on direct descriptive data. The purpose is to provide a narrative vignette. A narrative vignette, according to Erickson (1986) is a "vivid portrayal of the conduct of an event of everyday life, in which the sights and sounds of what was being said and done are described in the natural sequence of their occurrence in real time. The moment-to-moment style of description in a narrative vignette gives the reader a sense of *being there* in the scene" (p. 150).

General description involves providing the reader a synopsis or summary of what occurred. The researcher summarizes what is included throughout the field notes and other documents and materials and details the frequency with which key events occurred. The researcher also links key events to others like or unlike it for the reader. The primary purpose of general description is to provide a synopsis of a variety of events so that they can be seen together and in relationship to each other. Summary tables and charts are sometimes used as one way of providing this type of overall descriptive data.

Interpretative commentary involves the meaning as perceived by the researcher. Interpretative commentary points the reader to those details perceived as salient by the researcher and includes the assertions made by the researcher. The major purpose is to provide the reader with the researcher's analyses and interpretations of the data. This is an essential part of the research report, since in qualitative research patterns and significance in the data are discovered qualitatively, that is, through the analysis and interpretations of the researcher. The interpretative commentary also provides a rationale for any assertions made by bridging and making clear for the reader the connections and links between the particular

and general descriptions and the researcher's assertions. Interpretative commentary can involve discussions about the practical significance of the findings or more theoretical discussions that point to the general significance of the patterns identified in the data.

In reporting the findings of an investigation the researcher has two primary purposes: (a) to present assertions and (b) to display the evidence that warrants the assertions. In an article on how Italian immigrants experience schooling in Canada, Ziegler (1980) provides an example of how a key assertion can be backed up, in this particular case, by direct quotes. (This example also happens to point out that it is not only students labeled "special" who suffer in "regular" classes that are insensitive to individual differences.)

> For children the experience of total immersion in a foreign language environment is nothing short of devastating. "I felt like a piece of wood," said a fifteen-year-old boy. And a thirteen-year-old (said): "It was as if I was in a corner, sort of hiding, and all the other kids would find me and they couldn't understand that I didn't understand English and couldn't get their messages in my corner." Even the simplest question was torture: "The teacher would ask me my name and I was afraid to say my name because they said it so much different from how I would say my own name, and it was awful." This from a twelve-year-old girl. (p. 265)

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) provide other examples of how interpretations and assertions can be supported by descriptive data that the reader may want to review. However, regardless of how it is done, low-inference, descriptive data should convince the reader of the validity of the analyses and interpretations. Care must also be exercised to present an accurate representation of what was found since selective presentation of evidence, if improperly handled, can mislead the reader.

Conclusion

A conclusion section is often included by the researcher to refocus on the purpose of the investigation and concisely address the purpose with a brief summary of the findings. In addition to providing a synopsis of what was outlined earlier in the report, the researcher may also point to the limitations of the study and/or expand or elaborate on the implications of the findings. Insights about how the findings may be used and possible further research needs are also commonly presented.

In general, while each of the content areas noted in this section is worthy of consideration, it should be stressed that the contents of well-written and respected academic reports vary considerably. All reports need not necessarily address each of these areas, nor is

this list exhaustive. However, content such as that discussed in this section can provide the reader of a report with information that can assist in understanding and evaluating the findings of a qualitative investigation. (See Table 1.)

Finally, while content such as that outlined here tends to give a report an appearance of "complete objectivity," it is generally recognized by qualitative researchers that what is studied and how it is studied and analyzed is influenced by the values, interpretations, and perspectives of the investigator. Thus, qualitative researchers seldom claim that their reports are totally unbiased. However, they do try to let the reader know, to the best of their knowledge, what their perspectives and biases were and how they collected and analyzed their data, to allow the reader to judge for

TABLE 1

Summary: Contents of Report

Introduction
- Background information
- Purpose of study
- Organization of report

Methodology
- Site, settings, subjects
- When and for how long study was conducted
- Techniques employed to enter the field, select subjects, and record data
- Thoughts and perceptions of researcher throughout study
- Role of researcher
- Nature of data collected (interview, observation, documents)
- Corroborative procedures employed

Findings
- Descriptive, low-inference data
- Summaries of descriptive data
- Analyses of data including why and how
- Interpretations and assertions of researcher
- Support for assertions made in descriptive data provided

Conclusion
- Summary of purpose and findings of study
- Implications of findings
- Limitations of study
- Future research needs

him or herself the potential usefulness of the findings. As Geertz (1973) has observed:

> I have never been impressed by the argument that, as complete objectivity is impossible in these matters (as, of course, it is), one might as well let one's sentiments run loose. As Robert Solow has remarked, that is like saying that as a perfectly aseptic environment is impossible, one might as well conduct surgery in a sewer. (p. 30)

ORGANIZING THE TEXT OF THE REPORT

The organizational approach selected to present the findings of an investigation should provide a clear, concise description of the findings and research procedures. Information such as the focus, background, site, settings, participants, and specific procedures may be interwoven with the discussion of the findings or, as is more commonly done, may be reported in the initial sections of the paper as introductory information. Five organizational approaches to qualitative research reporting, identified by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), are summarized in this section.

Natural History

In the natural history approach, events are organized sequentially. That is, the report corresponds directly to the time the investigator spent in the field and the process by which the research developed. The researcher reports the investigation by summarizing and explaining what was explored and discovered first, second, third, and so on. This is a natural way to describe how particular themes and/or problems were identified and progressively focused upon in the course of the fieldwork. However, the findings of an investigation do not always unfold in a neat sequential fashion; thus the natural history approach may not always be the best method for organizing a report.

Chronology

The chronology approach can be used in investigations in which patterns that follow a developmental cycle emerge. This approach differs from the natural history approach, which provides a sequential account of the events during the investigation (i.e. follows how the data and research process emerged) whereas the chronology approach focuses on determining a sequence of patterns or stages found in the data (i.e. follows how the phenomenon under study developed). For example, if an investigator was studying how

students were placed in special education, the data might indicate that the chronological stages were (a) teacher concern about a problem, (b) referral, (c) interdisciplinary team evaluation of the child, (d) staffing, (e) placement, and (f) follow-up. Thus, the main body of the report might be organized according to subheadings indicating this chronology. This approach can allow for bits of data to be organized into manageable parts and related to one another. However, the researcher can use the chronology approach only when patterns or stages emerge from the data and are readily discernible. If patterns are not clearly found in the data, using a chronology approach may suggest more order and coherence than is actually the case.

Narrowing or Expanding the Focus

Moving a discussion through progressive levels, for example, from a narrow to a broad focus or vice versa, is another approach that has been successfully used in organizing qualitative research findings. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) liken this type of organization to the progressive steps possible with a "zoom lens" in moving either in or out. For example, a researcher might discuss the findings about a reading program in terms of a district, a school, a classroom, a small group, and an individual child. It should be noted that a theoretical or analytical rationale for such levels is important to the selection of reasonable levels or layers. The researcher also must protect against selecting levels for their coherence or expected logic rather than because they fit the data collected.

Separating Narration and Analysis

Some researchers separate the data or narration of the study from any analyses and/or interpretations. In this approach, descriptions of a situation can be presented sequentially and coherently without analytic interruptions to the account. Likewise, analysis and interpretations of a situation can be presented uninterrupted by bulky supportive evidence that can potentially distract the reader from concepts and ideas being proposed. However, care must be taken by the researcher when using this approach to guard against developing analytic interpretations that are not grounded or supported by the data collected.

Thematic or Topical Organization

Determining sets of topics or categories can provide a convenient way of organizing a great deal of information into a coherent ordering. Topics of organization might include components or

aspects deemed important to an investigation (e.g., physical arrangement of the classroom, curriculum, classroom rules, and teacher and student interaction patterns), membership in categories of people (e.g., administrators, teachers, pupils and parents), and/or formal theoretical models (e.g., developmental, functional, and deficiency). In thematic organization, care must be taken to allow the organizing categories, topics, or themes to emerge from the data.

Example: Topical Organization

Levine and Langness (1985) organized and reported the results of their qualitative investigation of the everyday cognition employed by persons labeled mildly retarded when grocery shopping around five topical headings.

> The units were: (a) *Logistics*: any ordering strategies participants used to guide their movements through the store; (b) *Activity goal*: social and economic factors mentioned by participants that affected their marketing; (c) *Item selection*: type of item chosen, quality level, and brand, and reasons for selection; (d) *Quantity selection*: size or amount of grocery item selected and reasons, as well as any measurement skills employed, such as unit pricing, weighing, and cost estimation/comparison; and (e) *Payment strategy*: calculation skills and bill-paying procedures. (pp. 22–23)

In conclusion, there are a number of ways to organize a qualitative research report. Some of the most popular were reviewed in this section. Researchers should be aware of different organizational approaches for textual arrangement and evaluate each in terms of its potential advantages and disadvantages for the particular investigation to be reported. In general, however, regardless of the organizational approach employed, it is important to exercise care so not to oversimplify, bias, or inadvertently misrepresent the findings.

WRITING THE REPORT

Writing a qualitative research report, or any paper, is not an easy task. There are a wide diversity of ways people can successfully approach writing. What works best for one person is not necessarily

optimal for another. This should be considered when developing your own approach to writing. The following suggestions may be helpful to the reader who is just getting started or who is experiencing difficulty in completing writing tasks.

Schedule Time for Writing

Some researchers simply sit down "when the mood strikes" and work on their writing tasks. However, for many researchers, one of the most important elements in getting a report written is scheduling time to do it and then sticking to the schedule. The amount of time needed depends on the length, complexity, and difficulty of the task and the experiences and skills of the researcher. Spending time in concentrated mental tasks is tiring and this should be taken into account when scheduling blocks of time. Also, if possible, it is generally best not to set a strict closure point for completion of a paper. Instead, work consistently during your scheduled time periods until you can no longer improve the paper. If a closure point is necessary, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) recommend that you should "Allow plenty of time for your writing and then at least double it—it takes longer than you think" (p. 208). Tenacity is critical, because at times it will appear that little if any progress is being made.

Establish a Comfortable, Convenient Working Area

Because of the large amount of data collected in most qualitative studies, you probably will need a place where a great deal of material can be spread out and sifted through. A quiet place, free from interruptions and distractions, is also a necessity—a library, for example. The place chosen should also be evaluated for physical factors such as lighting, ventilation, and comfortable seating, since physical fatigue or discomfort can lead to mental distractability, irritability, and fatigue. Likewise, convenient access is important. If a location is difficult to get to or arrange access to on a regular basis the writing process may be deterred.

Collect Field Notes, Related Literature, and Other Material

In preparing to write your report, gather together all the data and materials you need. While it may be impossible to foresee everything that is needed, gathering as much material as possible before you start can help cut down on later interruptions and delays. It is generally wise to consider material gathering as a preparation for writing rather than something to be done during scheduled writing times. Otherwise, you may be tempted to make "one" more visit to the field or the library rather than concentrating on studying the

material already gathered and organizing, developing, writing, and refining the report.

Determine Desired Audience

The content covered and the style of writing should be geared to the audience you are interested in reaching. Different background information, terminology, and technical detail, for example, may be needed for different audiences such as parents, teachers, administrators, researchers, and/or the general public. Similarly, different professional groups such as psychologists, social workers, or special or regular educators may require different background orientations to the qualitative research methods used and to the data presented.

Select Model

Locate several published qualitative research reports that are at least somewhat similar to the report you plan to write. These can help provide some guidelines or starting points that may be helpful in conceptualizing and organizing the writing task. Also, read through the journals or books of publishing companies to which you plan to submit your work to get an understanding of the types of reports they publish.

Concentrate Attention on Writing Task

Procrastination is a curse that plagues many, if not most, researchers. This is no less true for qualitative researchers. The symptoms are countless reasons not to get started or to take a break. "Even when they finally get themselves seated at their desks, they always seem to find diversions: make the coffee, sharpen the pencil, go to the bathroom, thumb through more literature, sometimes even get up and return to the field" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 172). One colleague described her primary symptom of procrastination at the onset of a writing task as an "overpowering urge to clean and organize closets and drawers" (Healy, 1985). Procrastination is a powerful deterrent to writing that must be overcome if a report is to be completed.

Outline the Writing Task

Developing a detailed outline can help organize the actual writing task and provide a starting point. After all the data has been organized and analyzed, all the sections of the manuscript should be identified and the material in each section outlined. The more detailed the outline, the easier the writing task is likely to be. Also, outlining the paper will help you break down the task into

manageable parts while at the same time maintaining a vision of the whole. Be ready to modify or change the outline if necessary as the paper develops.

Explain the Purpose, Theme, or Topic

The major purpose or theme of most qualitative research endeavors will have developed and taken focus throughout the investigation. Some researchers start a report by writing down the purpose or focus and rationale for the investigation. Explaining the purpose and rationale for the investigation to others in written form helps you to clarify the task to yourself and begin to produce the report. This provides a sense of accomplishment and confidence.

Write the Paper

While it is often difficult to get started, it is critical to put something down on paper. Subsequently, your writing can be subjected to evaluation and modifications if needed. You can often use much of the writing done during the development of the field notes, interview transcripts, and data analysis to help get a section or two completed. After one or two sections are done clearly, continue to write other sections until the paper is done. Try to make each section as clear as possible.

Work for Simplicity and Clarity

It is important to communicate the findings and interpretations of a qualitative study as simply and clearly as possible. Use short, direct easy-to-read sentences. In general, not even the most complex or innovative findings and ideas require complex sentence structure or uncommon terminology to explain. Your findings, interpretations, and explanations should be as clear, simple, and accurate as possible. When a finding or idea is simply and clearly explained, it is typically more understandable, more useful, and more likely to reach a wide audience.

Particularly at the beginning, a novice researcher should attempt short, relatively simple writing tasks. If the investigation being reported is long and complex, try breaking it down into parts and write several short, direct reports rather than a complex, comprehensive one. Remember that, no matter how scholarly a report sounds, it is of little value unless the ideas are supported and clearly understood by the audience.

Modify and Polish the Report

Most researchers and writers write, rewrite, and rewrite again various sections and sometimes major portions of their manuscripts

before being satisfied even with a first draft of a report. Few people, if any, can write a final product on the first attempt. Before subjecting your paper to external review, refine and polish it.

Request Colleague Input

Having others read and comment on your paper before you submit it for publication consideration is usually helpful. Ask people who are experienced in publishing qualitative research and knowledgeable in your research area to read the manuscript. They may provide insights about omissions and unclear sections in your paper that you did not recognize. Also, it may be helpful to share the report with a colleague who is unfamiliar with the topic of your paper to determine how clearly the paper communicates to those without expertise in the area. You should ask your colleagues to criticize and make suggestions for improvement. Ask them to return the paper by a specific date, if possible. Be prepared to accept criticism. No matter how hard a writer works to produce an excellent paper, there are few papers that cannot be improved. Welcome criticisms and suggestions that allow you to improve your work before submitting it for publication.

Recognize that Writing Skills Develop Gradually

Most researchers, even those with considerable experience, find writing for professional dissemination difficult. As noted earlier, it requires writing, rethinking, and rewriting. A researcher must guard against giving up on a project too quickly, especially after receiving negative feedback. As noted by Bogdan and Biklen (1982): "People often tell us that we are lucky; they say, 'Writing comes so easy to you.' Writing comes easy neither to us nor to many others; it is hard work" (p. 172).

If you want to develop the skills needed to contribute to the professional literature through research and writing, you will need to recognize that expectations of immediate success are generally unrealistic. Learning to do research and professional writing takes time and effort. Expertise is gained only with experience and hard work. Just as athletes, artists, or other skilled individuals work, study, and train extensively before they become accomplished at their trade, so it is with writers. However, using your writing skills to report research findings and contribute to an understanding and knowledge base in your discipline can bring much satisfaction and gratification.

DISSEMINATION

This section focuses on the process involved in locating a publisher to disseminate a qualitative research report. Publishers of professional/academic journals and books may vary considerably in the process they use to select manuscripts for publication. However, the following guidelines will provide the aspiring author with some perspective on the academic publishing procedure.

Selecting a Publisher

The first decision that must be made is whether to publish the results of your research as an article or book. In education, qualitative researchers have traditionally tended to publish their work in book form. There are several reasons for this. One is that qualitative research generally involves large amounts of data that are gathered and analyzed; it usually takes a book-length manuscript to cover everything adequately. One of the most frequently cited problems with qualitative research reports submitted for review as articles in professional journals is excessive length. Journals have limited space; this must be considered when developing a manuscript for review as an article.

Another reason most qualitative researchers have published their work in book form is that many special and regular education journals have concentrated on publishing quantitative research findings and/or position papers. However, this is changing, and as qualitative research theories and methodology gain professional recognition and understanding, increasing numbers of such articles are being published. If this trend continues, deciding whether an investigation should be published in article or book form will depend in the future primarily on the amount and complexity of the information to be reported and on the researcher's time and energy available to invest in the project.

It should also be noted that most reports of qualitative research findings published in journals represent only one or a few of the most salient points identified in an investigation. Most qualitative research articles are not considered to be complete descriptions of an investigation since space is simply not adequate to describe all the critical elements. One of the critical elements often left out is a clear description of methodology employed. However, while in the past such reports tended to focus almost entirely on the interpretations and supporting evidence of a qualitative investigation, there is a growing movement to include more of the methods or procedural aspects of such studies in at least a condensed form, to assist the reader to more critically view and understand the findings.

After you decide on an article or book, the manuscript should be submitted to an appropriate journal or book publisher. Journal and book publishers are usually interested in certain types of manuscripts, and they also have different standards. Journals, in addition to being directed at specific professional disciplines (e.g. *Exceptional Children, Educational Psychology),* also tend to be geared toward particular audiences (e.g. teachers, researchers). Some journals focus on a particular topical area (e.g. classroom management) or one particular theoretical or research orientation (e.g. applied behavioral analysis).

In general, the most prestigious journals and book publishers have high standards; they receive a large number of manuscripts and can afford to be highly selective about what they publish. Thus, the novice researcher should become familiar with the entire range of publishers available by browsing through periodicals in the library, to gain an awareness of the breadth of potential publishers appropriate for his or her report. Some researchers publish their beginning research efforts with less competitive publishers and gradually work toward the more prestigious organizations.

Read through several copies of the particular journal you are interested in or through several books published by the publishing company you are considering. As you read, note the topics covered, audience addressed, style of writing, and length of the publications. An otherwise good manuscript may be rejected because one of these aspects is inappropriate for the particular journal or book publisher. When evaluating length, two to three double-spaced, typed pages usually equal about one page in a journal or book.

Submitting A Manuscript

Before you submit the manuscript, it should be in the correct style and format for the publisher. Generally, the manuscript needs to be neatly typed, double spaced with wide margins. The references should be put at the end. However, most journals and book publishers have specific style and format requirements such as those outlined in the *Publication Manual* of the American Psychological Association (1983). Various style manuals are available in college and university libraries and/or bookstores. Which style to use can be determined by reading through the journal or several books from the book publishing company of interest to you; if you are in doubt, it may be best to write the editor for guidelines.

Exactly what you submit differs depending upon whether you are submitting an article or book. For articles, most journals require three to five copies of the article in final, polished form. In addition to the text of the manuscript, most professional journals require an abstract no longer than one double-spaced typed page. Author

2.5
2.8
2.2
3.2
2.0
3.6
4.0
100 mm
1.0
1.1
1.25
1.4
1.6
2.8
2.5
3.2
2.2
3.6
2.0
4.0
1.8
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
1.0 mm
1.5 mm
2.0 mm
A5

identification information should be listed on the title page or a separate sheet, with no mention of the author's name or affiliation on the abstract or text pages. (However, the title of the manuscript is usually put at the top of the first page of the manuscript.) In general, only one copy of the author information sheet needs to be sent, regardless of the number of manuscript copies sent. This allows refereed journals to send copies of the manuscript to reviewers to evaluate without the reviewer's knowing the author—a standard practice of adjudicated journals.

Book publishers usually require only one copy of the manuscript. In most instances, you need to submit only the table of contents, three or four sample chapters, and a prospectus. The prospectus is generally three to four pages long and describes the purpose of the book, the audience it is intended for, and its projected length. The details of what to include in a prospectus can be obtained by writing to the publishing company or reviewing various guides to publishing. If your book chapters are particularly lengthy or costly to duplicate and mail, or you are unsure about possible publisher interest in the topic of your manuscript, it may be more prudent to send the editor a letter of inquiry. Explain the topic of your manuscript and send along a prospectus and the table of contents. Ask the editor if he or she wants to review sample chapters before you mail them.

A short letter should accompany the manuscript, whether it is an article or book. The letter might say something like: "Find enclosed a copy of a manuscript entitled _____. I would like to have it considered for publication." You also may want to describe the purpose and content of the manuscript as this can often assist the editor in making an initial decision about whether the manuscript is appropriate for the journal or book company and in selecting appropriate reviewers.

Many journals or book companies acknowledge the submission of a manuscript by sending the author a postcard or a short letter. However, not all publishers do this. To ensure that your manuscript is received you can enclose a self-addressed, stamped postcard to be mailed to you by the editor upon receipt. A more expensive approach is to send your manuscript by certified mail. Regardless of such measures, always keep several copies of the manuscript in a safe place, because copies of the manuscript are generally not returned to the author and/or may be lost in the mail.

Finally, an article should not be submitted to more than one journal at a time. Most journals are fairly strict about this. However, book publishers are not as concerned and it is usually acceptable to submit to more than one book publisher simultaneously. However, when submitting to more than one book publisher, it is probably

best to let the book publisher know to avoid misunderstandings or confusion in the event the book is accepted by more than one publisher.

Manuscript Review and Notification Process

Upon receiving the manuscript, typically an editor or associate editor screens it for appropriateness. If the manuscript is determined in the initial editorial screening to be inappropriate due to its topic, length, content, or style, the author is usually notified within a month that the manuscript has been rejected. It should be noted that rejection of a manuscript at this stage does not, in most cases, reflect upon the quality of the report but rather that the topic or content does not fit the particular needs of the publisher.

Most professional journals are refereed or adjudicated. After the initial screening, manuscripts are sent to two or three consulting or field reviewers, without identifying the manuscript author, for critical analysis and recommendations. The reviewers are requested to make a publication recommendation, present a rationale for the recommendation, and provide suggestions for the author that could improve the manuscript. Recommendation choices usually are similar to the following: (a) publish as is or with minor revisions, (b) publish with major revisions, (c) rewrite and resubmit, or (d) do not publish. Each reviewer submits a recommendation to the editor, who typically makes the final decision. Editors rarely make unilateral decisions. Decisions are generally heavily dependent on the recommendations of the reviewers in combination with the editor's evaluation.

If the recommendation is to publish as is or with revisions, and if the designated modifications are made to the editor's satisfaction, you can expect that the manuscript will be published in that journal. If the recommendation is to rewrite and resubmit you should be encouraged since, although the manuscript has not been accepted, some interest in it is being expressed. If the manuscript is rejected, study the rationale for rejection and recommendations for change, then make the changes you consider appropriate and resubmit it to another publisher who may be more likely to publish a manuscript such as yours.

Book publishers typically follow a similar process in evaluating a book manuscript for publication. If a partial manuscript has been submitted, a book publisher may request more material before making a decision. The author's name and affiliation are often not withheld from field reviewers of books, so the reviewers are aware of the author(s). Also, it is important to remember that book publishers are more likely to weight the criteria of marketability

heavily since most book publishers are operating commercial businesses and the profit factor is critical to their operations.

It generally takes approximately 3 to 6 months to receive a decision regarding publication of a journal article. Book publishers often make a decision a little more quickly. It is accepted practice for some journal publishers and standard practice for book publishers to request that the author sign a contract giving exclusive rights to the manuscript to the publisher. Most contracts from journals, however, do allow for the provision that the author can use his or her work in future publications, such as developing a book manuscript compiling previously published articles. Also, the acceptance contract generally spells out the terms of the agreement, such as the number of journals and/or reprints of the article the author will receive, any monetary compensation for manuscript publication (usually books), and/or any costs payable by the author. It should be noted that some journals charge the author a fee (about $35 to $50 per journal page) for publication.

Once a manuscript is accepted for publication, the author can expect to see it in print within 1 to 2 years. Journals vary depending on their publication schedule, backlog of accepted articles, and topic organization of the journals. Most publishers send an edited copy of the manuscript to the author; any desired substantive changes to the manuscript should be sent to the editor before or when the edited copy is returned. Once the galley proofs (typeset copy of the manuscript as it will appear when published) are made, any changes are costly to the publisher and should be restricted to typographical errors if at all possible.

As previously noted, most researchers view criticism of their work as a vital part of their learning experience. It is important not to become too discouraged when a negative decision is received. It is often unreasonable to consider first attempts at any task to be expert quality; and this is particularly true of research/professional report writing. As stated by Bogdan and Biklen (1982):

> The most common response that one receives is out-and-out rejection. Although some of the rejection letters and reviewers comments can be insulting, it is important that you do not take the rejection as an indication of your inferiority. Most authors get a number of rejections before they get an acceptance. The odds say that you will be rejected. After all, many of the journals (and book publishers) have acceptance rates of only 10 percent. (p. 188)

The chance that your manuscript will be published eventually will be considerably enhanced if you take all reviewers' comments seriously, make revisions where needed, and resubmit the manuscript. Also, you can learn a lot through conducting research, writing

a manuscript, submitting it, and receiving feedback. This can help you in future research and writing efforts. The major difference between researchers who get their work published and those who do not is often the factor of determination.

CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with the final stage of the research process: the writing and dissemination of the research report. Any research effort should not be considered complete until the report is written and the results disseminated. The purpose of research is not only to increase your own understanding, but also to share that understanding with others (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

6 / Credibility of Qualitative Research Findings

The credibility of qualitative research has been addressed throughout this book. However, in this chapter, we will specifically review several concepts used by researchers in discussions about the credibility of a study. These concepts are: validity, reliability, generalizability, and authenticity. Our discussion will not always parallel that found in quantitative research books, since we will be discussing these concepts in terms of qualitative theory and methods as opposed to quantitative theory and methods. That is, we discuss ways of addressing credibility issues in qualitative research from an interpretative or phenomenological theoretical perspective.

VALIDITY

In qualitative research, findings can be considered valid if there is a fit between what is intended to be studied and what actually is studied. That is, the data represents what the researcher was attempting to study. Without validity of the data, reliability and potential generalizability are virtually useless.

Qualitative researchers attempt to strengthen the validity of their findings through "methods which provide first hand knowledge of the phenomenon under inquiry as it exists in the world" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1981, p. 74). For example, they use data collection techniques such as participant observation—immersing themselves with the natural participants in the natural settings, and unstructured interviewing, resembling natural conversation or interchange. In this context they attempt to obtain data unfiltered through the concepts, operational definitions, and rating scales of the researcher.

Qualitative researchers employ several specific approaches to enhance the likelihood of collecting valid data. These have been discussed throughout this book. For example, they enter and study a setting or situation so as *not* to alter its natural condition. That is, qualitative researchers generally use procedures that let them "blend into the woodwork." As noted in Chapter 2, upon entry the researcher attempts to develop rapport, gain the trust of the natural participants, and learn the natural interaction patterns in order to

participate in a natural, unobtrusive, and nonthreatening manner. This is important because, as stated by Douglas (1976), the less obtrusive the researcher the less likely it is that he or she will end up studying the influence of his or her own methods and the more likely it is that the data will reflect the phenomenon under study.

Although in qualitative research emphasis is focused on unobtrusive entry and participation in a natural setting, it is usually unrealistic to assume that all researcher effects have been eliminated. The qualitative researcher should consciously seek to recognize and understand the influence of his or her presence and of the investigative process on the participants and setting. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation in a setting can assist the researcher in understanding the participants' actions and viewpoints so distortions in the data introduced by either a researcher or research process can be more easily identified.

Finally, according to Bolster (1983), qualitative studies can be considered valid for the following reasons:

> As [qualitative researchers] systematically define the properties of the classroom, observe events in it, and listen to people talk about them, patterns of the events and the interrelationships among them will begin to emerge . . . . The eventual critical description is validated in two ways: referentially—the explanatory generalizations must be consistent with repeated patterns of events recorded in the observational datá; and situationally—the explanatory framework must be consistent with the meanings teachers and students draw from and impose upon the classroom situation. (pp. 304–305)

RELIABILITY

Reliability is often defined as the consistency and stability of data or findings. From a positivistic perspective, reliability typically is considered to be synonymous with the consistency of data produced by observations made by different researchers (e.g. interrater reliability), by the same researcher at different times (e.g. test-retest reliability) or by splitting a data set into two parts (e.g. split-half reliability).

For several reasons, the positivistic approaches to reliability are generally *not* relevant to data collected using qualitative methods. One reason is that, due to the emerging rather than predetermined design approach used, two researchers are not likely to produce the same results. Researchers bring to an investigation different backgrounds and interests that are likely to influence the design of the study; that is, the specific questions asked, data collection

procedures used, and research strategies employed. They may also, because of different backgrounds and interests, interpret the data differently and reach different conclusions. Thus, it is not surprising that different researchers are likely to produce different, though not necessarily inaccurate, sets of findings and interpretations about the same inquiry area or setting.

Example: Different Researchers Produce Different Findings

The concept of reliability of findings across researchers as a necessary or critical variable to a credible investigation has been addressed by Kirk and Miller (1986):

> Freeman (1983) impeaches Mead's (1928) early ethnographic conclusions, most notably that anger, violence, and competition are neutralized in Samoan culture. Freeman and Mead also differ substantially in their respective evaluations of adolescent sexual behavior.
>
> The discrepancy between the observations of Mead and Freeman compel a discussion of reliability. Indeed, Freeman effectively finesses the issue of . . . reliability, presenting historical and survey evidence to indicate that the Samoa he studied had not been radically transfigured during the decades after Mead's visit. Freeman, then, sees [the different findings he obtained] as an issue of . . . reliability. Naturally, he regards his own conclusions as internally reliable and those of Mead as counterfeit.
>
> There is an alternative to choosing between Mead and Freeman. The possibility of accepting both sets of findings, however, requires a theory of how Mead and Freeman obtained the different results that they did. Mead talked with female adolescents at a time she herself was a young woman. Freeman conducted much of his study of Samoa with male parents at a time he himself was a high-ranking adult. Mead's and Freeman's conclusions are together based on the interplay of the field researcher and the studied culture, but this case study may boil down to different investigators observing different parts of the same Samoan scene.
>
> Indeed, the sexual behavior of adolescents is a touchy subject and Samoans are inclined to be insulted by the suggestion that Samoan teenagers are promiscuous. (This

Continued

Example *Continued*

reminds one of Malinowski's famous passage about a Martian anthropologist asking a British aristocrat whether adulterous hanky-panky goes on in the Commonwealth.) It is possible that Samoan culture is not so different from contemporary American culture on the score of adolescent sex. By analogy, an American daughter might well tell (to a young and female adult ethnographer) some pretty interesting stories based on considerable sophistication; at the same time, an American male parent might assert (to an adult male ethnographer) that his daughters are virgin. By the same token, the father's description of his work life as a "rat race" might seem inconsistent with the daughter's characterization of her Daddy and his friends as "nice men."

The point here is that Freeman's findings do not necessarily refute Mead's, or vice-versa. Mead and Freeman were on to different aspects of a very large and complex subject. The partial understandings they achieved are different for good reason, and we are better off with both sets of findings than only one. (pp. 46–47)

Note: From *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research* (pp. 46–47) by J. Kirk and M. L. Miller, 1986, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications. Copyright 1986 by Sage Publications. Reprinted by permission.

A second reason that traditional reliability concerns are not relevant to many qualitative investigations is the recognition of the influence of contextual differences that operate in many natural settings when a researcher collects data. Different or even contradictory data may be obtained by the same researcher due to factors or circumstances in the setting being different (e.g. the presence of relevant others), rather than attributable to a lack of reliability. That is, people may respond or behave differently toward a topic or issue if the historical or present context surrounding the questions, conversation, observations, or setting are different. Because qualitative researchers collect their data in natural, uncontrolled settings such differences can and often do occur.

Finally, the traditional positivistic view of reliability is unjustifiable when applied to qualitative research findings because, from a theoretical stance, while quantitative methodology attempts to address data that is objective, stable, or static, qualitative researchers collect data that is often subjective, dynamic, or changeable over time. Thus, to define reliability in regard to consistency of findings over time is in direct opposition to the nature of the data collected with qualitative methods. People's views and perceptions change due to experiences and other influental factors in settings, and as a result, reliability, as defined by quantitative researchers, does not necessarily apply.

As a result of such difficulties in attempting to apply a positivistic view of reliability to qualitative research findings, Taylor and Bogdan (1981) redefine reliability in a manner more congruent with qualitative theory and methodology. From a qualitative perspective, reliability is viewed as the fit between what actually occurs in the setting under study and what is recorded as data. It is not literal consistency across different observations.

Given a view of reliability as the fit between what occurs and what is recorded, several methodological procedures common to qualitative inquiry are generally used that enhance reliability of findings. One such procedure is the practice of recording detailed field notes. The researcher records everything that occurs during an interview or observation after each encounter, being careful to include what actually occurred as distinct from the perceptions, insights, inferences, or implications gleaned by the researcher. For a more comprehensive discussion of field notes see Chapter 4.

A second procedure commonly used in qualitative research to enhance reliability between what is reported and what actually occurred in the setting is to conduct qualitative research in teams. Team members can provide feedback on field notes, interview transcripts, and other data in regard to its comprehensiveness and accuracy.

A third procedure is to let the participants review the field notes and/or final report. They are encouraged to provide feedback on the accuracy and comprehensiveness of what is stated.

Another more recently recognized approach to reliability checking in qualitative methodology is what Halpern (1983) has called an inquiry audit. In this procedure an outside researcher is called in to fill the role of an auditor throughout an investigation. The auditor's job is to authenticate accounts of the data by examining the process used for fairness of representation; to examine the product justifiability by checking confirmatory documents; and to verify with other parties involved (e.g., participants) that the findings represent what occurred. See Chapter 4 and Lincoln and Guba (1985) for further discussion of the inquiry audit procedure.

GENERALIZABILITY

Many researchers have accepted the proposition that among the most basic of their goals is generalization. They seek to "discover generalizations that make it unnecessary . . . to think through the particulars of each case . . . and what is good for one is good for all—at least all in the class" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 111). However, generalizations are very difficult to achieve, particularly when studying people in natural settings.

There are two primary reasons for this difficulty. The first is that people are complex, with a variety of unique characteristics. Also, there are many subtle and unique differences operating in different natural settings. Thus, no two people, groups of people or settings are likely to be the same, owing to a wide range of complex and unique characteristics. As a result, generalizations are not likely to hold true across different individuals and settings. A second reason that worthwhile generalizations are difficult to achieve is what Cronbach (1975) refers to as generalization decay. People's characteristics, perceptions, and situations change over time. Circumstances in education are often *not* static or enduring, but dynamic. For this reason the validity of generalizations erodes over time as change occurs. Thus, attempting to discover "true" generalizations in education is difficult if not impossible in many instances.

Given that "true," enduring generalizations in education are not a feasible outcome of most inquiry, Cronbach (1975) has suggested an alternative. He suggests that findings from research be considered working hypotheses rather than generalized facts or rules. This working hypothesis approach is recommended for qualitative researchers since when all of the particular characteristics of people and situations in natural settings are given proper weight, any generalization should *not* be a conclusion but rather a working hypothesis. In a working hypothesis, specific information about both groups of people and/or situations (the new one and the one previously studied) is required to make a judgment concerning possible degree of transferability of findings. A working hypothesis resulting from an in-depth inquiry into one or more situations can be evaluated as to its potential applicability to another situation or situations by considering the similarity of particular conditions operating in the new as compared to the old situation(s). That is, generalization of findings is not assumed but rather considered and evaluated in terms of its possibility.

Approaches to enhancing generalization or representativeness of findings in qualitative research investigations are varied. Many qualitative researchers simply "make no claims of representativeness or generalizability" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1981, p. 77). In qualitative investigations, breadth is often sacrificed for depth in

order to gain a detailed understanding of a single or small group of people in one or several situations. Questions of generalizability or representativeness are seen as questions to be answered by other studies, by collecting and consolidating the findings of several investigations, or by conducting a large number of less intense mini-studies in order to indicate the nonidiosyncratic nature of the work (Taylor & Bogdan, 1981).

Some qualitative researchers, however, build procedures into their investigation that are designed to enhance the potential for generalization or representativeness. For instance, inquiry strategies such as the analytic inductive and constant comparative, and methods such as purposeful sampling and triangulation, have been incorporated into investigations to foster the potential for representativeness. See Chapters 3 and 4 for an explanation and discussion of such procedures.

Romberg (1981) has noted that:

> It is important to argue that they [findings] apply not only to the schools being studied, but are likely to apply to other schools as well. Showing the reader how to relate the original descriptions and interpretations which were rooted in a particular context to wider social context of assumptions, beliefs, values, and purposes is a central issue of field study. (p. 23)

Remember, however, that while the potential for generalizability or representativeness of qualitative findings is important and can be enhanced by using various strategies and approaches in the inquiry process, it is not necessarily desirable to do so, depending on the intent or purpose of the researcher. As previously noted, the researcher may choose to invest available resources in seeking greater depth in particulars concerning a situation and may simply make "no claims of representativeness." Also, it should be noted that in qualitative research, if there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere. The original researcher cannot know the sites (and/or persons) to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do. The best advice to give anyone seeking to make a transfer is to accumulate evidence about participants, settings, and contextual similarity. The responsibility of the original investigator ends at providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible. Even if the applier believes on the basis of the evidence that sending and receiving contexts are sufficiently similar to allow one to entertain the possibility of transfer, he or she is nevertheless well advised to carry out a small verifying study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

AUTHENTICITY

Some qualitative researchers discuss the "authenticity" of their studies. One authenticity criteria that has received considerable attention focuses on whether the researcher has ascertained and presented a balanced view of all the perspectives, values, and beliefs that relate to whatever was investigated (House, 1976; Lehne, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Strike, 1982). That is, has the researcher been fair in presenting all the different points of view?

Four other criteria for evaluating the authenticity of qualitative inquiry have been suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1986).

1. Have all concerned parties involved with the research (e.g. the researchers, gatekeepers, participants, research consumers) been made aware of the details and complexities of whatever is being studied—including social, cultural, and political influences—and as a result are their perspectives more rich, full, and sophisticated?. (See the list of questions on p. 70 of this book for one example of what all parties involved in a research endeavor might want to become aware of.)
2. Have all concerned parties been assisted to understand and appreciate the values, beliefs, judgments, and actions of others? It should be noted that this criteria promotes the appreciation and understanding of the views of others, not necessarily the acceptance of such views.
3. Has action based on the findings been facilitated and stimulated? This is analogous to the concept of putting "theory or research findings into practice."
4. Given that applied research should promote action, was the action or change promoted effective? That is, did the research result in desired or worthwhile change, and from whose perspective was the change worthwhile?

Each of these criteria for authenticity represent an attempt to address criticisms of socially oriented inquiry. However, the conceptualization and applicability of some of these criteria are still topics of debate and discussion. They should be considered tentative and speculative at this time.

CONCLUSION

The credibility of any research is important. However, it is also important to evaluate the credibility of any study in terms of the theory underlying the study and the specific purposes or aims of the investigator.

7 / Using Qualitative Research Responsibly

Educational research is changing. Recent trends indicate a "softening" toward strict adherence to quantitative research theory and methods (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Rist, 1980; Smith, 1983; Wilson, 1977). Attention has begun to focus on the potential contributions that qualitative research can make to educational inquiry. As noted by Bogdan and Biklen (1982):

> A field once dominated by measurement, operationalized definitions, variables, and empirical facts is having to make room for a research approach that emphasizes inductive analysis, description, and the study of people's perceptions. Generations of educational researchers trained to think of education research in one dimension, the quantitative, are being asked to embrace a broader view. Approaches that a short time ago were peremptorily dismissed as prescientific or "fluff" have begun to play a role more central to education research. (p. xiii)

Researchers in special education will probably attempt to make more use of qualitative research in the future in order to reap the potential benefits. Drawing qualitative research procedures into the current repertoire of procedures for inquiry in special education could lead to, among other things, the development of better grounded ideas and theories in education, a more holistic approach to inquiry, and more attention to the social and educational relevance of research efforts. However, the incorporation of qualitative research into education carries with it certain responsibilities as well as potential benefits. In this chapter we review a few of the responsibilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Avoiding Misuse

It is essential that educators carefully examine qualitative research and the purposes for which it is best suited. There is little doubt

that qualitative research is vulnerable to potential misuse, as is any research approach. As noted by Rist (1980), qualitative research could become a mantle to legitimate much work that is shoddy, poorly conducted, and ill-conceived. Rist noted that in some of his experiences:

> When such work is questioned, the response is to turn to terminology for defense; and in the end to say that . . . it is inappropriate for an outsider to challenge what was a phenomenological and very personal experience. The logic of the method becomes inverted. Rather than make the uncommon comprehendible, the defense becomes one of prioritizing what ought to have been open to scrutiny. (pp. 8–9)

Thus, it should be stressed that because qualitative researchers often collect data on the subjective perceptions of people, it does not necessarily follow that their research strategies should not be open to scrutiny. A strong knowledge base in qualitative theory and methodology is required before conducting this type of research. Although more loosely defined than quantitative procedures, there are standards and procedures that can be followed when conducting and reporting qualitative research.

Adhering to Basic Methodology

While most traditional qualitative researchers welcome the recent growing interest in their methods, they fear that in some cases qualitative research is being prostituted. They believe that many of the "newcomers" are not adhering to basic methodological considerations. Fetterman (1982) voiced concern that the adoption by educators of random elements or isolated components of qualitative research methodology, without attention to the whole, could result in the loss of many built-in safeguards for obtaining credible results. Rist (1980) refers to some of the "new" ways of doing qualitative research as "blitzkrieg ethnography." According to Rist:

> Whereas the classical approach was one of spending considerable time in the field, learning the nuances and deep "meanings," we now find "hit and run" forays into the field being termed ethnographic research. The view is that rapport, familiarity, trust, and insight can all be manufactured instantaneously. It was in all seriousness that an educational researcher recently told me he had perfected a new form of ethnography: "blitzkrieg ethnography." That there was a fundamental contradiction between the two terms was lost on him. Not having accepted the domain and underlying assumptions that have heretofore guided the method had essentially

> left him free to improvise and relabel a community survey as a new form of ethnography. (p. 9)

Qualitative research is based on the notion that deep and valid description and well-grounded hypotheses and theories emerge from a wide variety of data gathered over an extended period of time in the field. Wolcott (1975) has noted that this simply is not an approach for those who do not have time for serious research.

Seeking Contextual Meaning

A critical element in gaining an understanding of the perceptions of participants is to understand the social and cultural context of the situation in which statements are made and behaviors are exhibited. In qualitative inquiry, whatever is being studied is viewed as a whole in context. The social and cultural context is often made up of a broad array of variables such as the home and community environment; historical antecedents; the motivation, educational background, and interests of the participants; and the physical arrangement, emotional climate, rules, and schedules of the setting. Thus, it would be unreasonable to assume that full contextual understanding could be easily achieved in almost any investigation. While it is impossible to study everything, the investigator should guard against limiting the scope of a qualitative investigation in such a way that isolated elements out of contexts become the focus of study. That is, the researcher must allow the data gathered to guide him or her toward whatever data are needed for an understanding of the contextual scene. Without an understanding of the contextual scene, much of the data regarding perceptions of participants operating within that context are of little meaning. As Wolcott (1984) has noted it is the contextual understanding of the scene which gives meaning to any data gathered.

Using Formalized Qualitative Methodology

Another controversy that has arisen is over the use of what has been termed "formalized" qualitative research methodology (Firestone & Herriott, 1983). Formalized qualitative methodology involves variations in qualitative methods such as the development of specific questions and research procedures before beginning fieldwork, the standardization of data collection procedures, and the systematic reduction of verbal narratives to quantitative data. It often involves the use of large numbers of research associates/assistants in multi-sites. According to Firestone and Herriott (1983), this type of qualitative research has developed because of concerns

on the part of many traditionally trained quantitative researchers about generalizability and reliability from a logical-positivism viewpoint, as well as the requirements for structure and timeliness when conducting large-scale research projects.

While there are obvious advantages to this type of qualitative research (especially if one views research from a traditional positivistic theoretical frame of reference), there are many potential drawbacks. Some qualitative researchers believe that if this trend continues, the real and most salient advantages of qualitative research could be lost (Fetterman, 1982; Rist, 1980; Wolcott, 1975). Qualitative research can provide a perspective that quantitative research cannot provide precisely because it is based on phenomenological theory and is naturalistic, flexible, holistic, exploratory, and discovery oriented. It seeks to gain the insider's perspective about what the relevant questions and concerns are, and this cannot be done if the researcher predetermines the questions and data collection procedures beforehand. It is essential to the purposes of qualitative research that methodology not be predetermined or become inflexible or rigid. As noted by Denzin (1978), "Too often researchers enter the field with predefined measures and questions that prevent them from allowing those studied to 'tell it as they see it' " (p. 10).

In addition, an overemphasis on the quantification of narrative verbal language can lead to misinterpretation of data and does not allow the reader of the research report to see the actual data (statements of the insiders) and make his or her own interpretation. As noted by Wolcott (1975), the qualitative researcher "is duty-bound to present enough primary data that his readers have an adequate basis for rendering their own judgments" (p. 124).

The authors do not mean to imply that there is no value to formalized qualitative research. There are obvious advantages. Heretical as these developments may seem to the traditionally trained qualitative researcher, there is much that should be encouraged, especially in regard to multi-site qualitative research. Multi-site qualitative research may be better able to influence public policy on a broad range of issues, a difficult task from the limited perspective of the lone researcher at a single site. Being able to someday combine in-depth description and analysis from a qualitative research approach with the generalizability available from multiple sites could be an important development (Rist, 1980). However, we should move cautiously with such developments, because of the potential losses to the real value of conducting qualitative research.

Avoiding Orthodoxy

While it is important, in our opinion, to read about and review the theories and methods of qualitative and other research approaches, it is also important not to become orthodox or rigid about applying them when conducting or evaluating research (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). The reason is that any procedures or methods (as well as the theories upon which they are based) are arbitrary. They are constructed by individuals or groups of people to serve their interests and purposes. Thus, there are no "best" or "right" ways of doing research beyond what we agree as a society is best or right; what we agree upon can and often does change. As a consequence, it is recommended that researchers and research consumers refrain, to the greatest extent possible, from becoming orthodox about any research procedure or set of procedures. As noted by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), "Part of the scientific attitude, as we see it, is to be open-minded about method and evidence" (p. 39).

This does not mean, however, that qualitative researchers should not report the procedures they employ in their research or that those who read the research should not evaluate how researchers went about conducting the study and reaching their conclusions. It only means that researchers and those who evaluate research should remain open-minded about methods and evidence.

Avoiding Undue Claims

Findings of any research, particularly research conducted in natural settings, are nearly always dependent upon, among other things, the investigator's values and interpretations, the particular procedures he or she selected to employ, and/or the unique context in which the study was conducted. Thus, qualitative researchers seldom claim that their findings are "definitive," "proven," or absolutely "accurate." They simply report the findings, their interpretations, and the procedures they employed. It is left up to the reader to accept or not to accept the research based on what he or she considers credible or plausible.

It is also essential to recognize that qualitative data can be used to foster understanding. It does not necessarily reflect what is "right" or "truth." That is, it reflects people's values, not the accuracy or appropriateness of those values. For example, prior to Magellan's voyage the preponderance of evidence, based on people's perceptions, would probably have indicated that the earth was flat. In a more contemporary example, if the perceptions of the white population in at least some regions in the United States had been studied immediately following the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, it would probably have been found that the decision was generally perceived to be incorrect.

However, this does not mean that the decision was incorrect; it only means that at that point in time people believed it to be incorrect. The vast majority of people would probably have a different point of view today.

Using Qualitative with Quantitative Methodology

Although there are varying views among researchers regarding the complementary use of qualitative research methodology (Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Smith & Heshusius, 1986), qualitative methodology need not be used, in our opinion, to the exclusion of quantitative methodology. Each methodology can be used to complement the other within the same area of inquiry, since they have different purposes or aims. Qualitative research could be viewed as a method of scholarly inquiry for gaining a deeper understanding, whereas quantitative research is often considered a scientific method for gaining prediction and control (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979). Using qualitative and quantitative methods together can provide a depth of perception, or binocular vision, that neither one can provide alone (Eisner, 1977). Reichardt and Cook (1979) noted that, far from being antagonistic, the two types of knowing (methods) are complementary and when used together help to correct for the inevitable biases in each method. Furthermore, quantitative knowing must rely on qualitative understanding. Perhaps the bottom line is that the qualitative findings provide the context of meanings in which quantitative findings can be understood. Campbell (1979), a noted quantitative researcher, explained:

> Too often quantitative social scientists, under the influence of missionaries from logical positivism, presume that in true science, quantitative knowing replaces qualitative, common-sense knowing. The situation is in fact quite different. Rather, science depends upon qualitative, common-sense knowing even though at best it goes beyond it. Science in the end contradicts some items of common sense, but it only does so by trusting the great bulk of the rest of common-sense knowledge. (p. 50)

Thus, both methodologies can be used in concert, to complement each other. This does not mean, however, that quantitative data should be evaluated from a qualitative theoretical perspective or conversely that qualitative data should be evaluated from a quantitative theoretical perspective. Rather, each type of data should be studied and evaluated based on the theoretical assumptions underlying the data with each type being brought together to provide various angles for a holistic or total view. As noted above, using such an approach can add a breadth and depth of view that cannot be achieved from a singular perspective. Such triangulation

is by definition a goal for qualitative research advocates, given that the holistic nature of their research requires recognizing and synthesizing all relevant perspectives or parts of the picture. It should be noted that Neumann (1987) has argued that the recognized need for research findings that are both valid and socially relevant in nature may provide the "starting point from which the two divergent paradigms of quantitative and qualitative approaches in educational research can be reconciled" (p. 168).

Considering Ethical Issues

One of the first ethical decisions that must be made is whether the research will be overt or covert. Most qualitative investigations in the field of education tend to be overt in nature. In overt research, the researcher identifies him or herself, informs the gatekeepers and informants about the investigation, and enlists their cooperation. In this type of research, it is generally expected that a researcher will explain his or her purpose and role to individuals with whom a sustained relationship is maintained, although such identification may not be necessary when there is only fleeting contact.

Some researchers have conducted covert research with success and recommended its use in selected instances (e.g. Dalton, 1961; Rosenhan, 1973). However, covert research raises some serious ethical concerns. Covert research involves secrecy and deception in that the researcher generally enters a situation as a peer, studying participants without their knowledge or permission. While some professionals recognize the deception inherent in covert research as potentially justifiable based on the practical social benefits of research findings (Douglas, 1976; Glaser, 1972; Humphreys, 1975), others feel that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Many professionals consider covert research as jeopardizing the reputation of researchers and potentially fostering ill-will among the people studied and the general public (Erikson, 1967; Warwick, 1975). Some consider covert research unethical because they feel that people have the right not to be researched (Sagarin, 1973) and the right not to be harmed, which can only be judged by the participants themselves (Spradley, 1980). Thus, if a researcher in education is considering the use of covert inquiry, the ethical implications of such research should be carefully addressed.

A major element in overt research is "informed consent." This stipulates that research participants have the right to be informed that they are being researched and about the nature of the research. For sponsored research, federal agencies require "that the potential research subject understand the intention of the research and sign an 'informed consent' form, which incidentally must specify that the subject may withdraw from the research project at any time"

(Weppner, 1977, p. 41). The important question is to what extent does informed consent apply to various aspects of qualitative research?

In natural public settings and organizations constantly engaged in interaction with a large number of people, it may be very difficult, if not physically impossible, to inform everyone of a researcher's identity and purpose.

In addition, in some qualitative research informed consent strictly applied can reduce natural participation and restrict much informal research to the point of making the research role untenable (Reiss, 1979).

The position of Punch (1986) in regard to this ethical concern is as follows:

> A professional code of ethics is beneficial as a guideline that alerts researchers to the ethical dimensions of their work, particularly prior to entry. With formal organizations and certain communities, where entry has to be negotiated through hierarchical channels, a statement of purpose is normally essential to satisfy gatekeepers. Thereafter it may be situationally inappopriate to repeat continually that purpose and to identify oneself. . . . To negotiate access and consent with everyone would be almost futile . . . . In natural settings involving public behavior, such as watching crowd behavior at a football match or studying avoidance rituals on a crowded pavement, then consent seems superfluous and physically unattainable. Any attempt to achieve it in the latter case would only serve to undermine the behavior one wishes to observe. (p. 37)

In general, in specific research situations you and your colleagues will be called upon to make a judgment regarding the ethical and moral responsibilities of the researcher in regard to overt and covert inquiry. It is critical that in such judgments both the rights of the participants and the integrity of the profession be maintained.

Other ethical concerns involve the need to treat participants with respect, and not to violate their trust, harm them when carrying out the research process, and/or interfere with activities in the setting. However, being able to do all of these things is not always easy. For example, an ethical dilemma exists in cases in which the researcher is present when participants engage in inhumane, immoral, or illegal activities. As noted by Taylor and Bogdan (1984), much of the literature generally supports a noninterventionist position in fieldwork since interference with participant activities limits the potential of the research being done and breaks the commitment of trust to the participants (Humphreys, 1975; Johnson, 1975; VanMaanen, 1983). On the other hand, if a researcher stands by passively someone may be harmed; in addition, nonintervention

may be perceived as condoning whatever is occurring and even perpetuating and facilitating it because the researcher's presence may encourage some participants to behave in an inappropriate manner to "show off" or "give the researcher what he or she wants."

The decision to intervene or not involves making an ethical choice and should be considered in light of the potential impact of intervention on stopping the behavior in an isolated incident versus the potential of wider impact for stopping such harmful behavior on a wider scale with the findings of a completed investigation. When the researcher is faced with such situations as physical or psychological abuse of other people or stealing from others, the ethical choice is often a very difficult one.

Ethical behavior is also an important variable in the reporting phase of a qualitative investigation. Both during and after an investigation, the researcher needs to be constantly aware of his or her ethical responsibility in reporting data or findings. One standard of ethical responsibility involves identification: Unless otherwise previously agreed upon with the participants, persons and places involved in the research remain anonymous and original data and field notes that could reveal the identity of persons or places remain confidential.

It is also the researcher's responsibility to report data accurately. Inadvertently reporting inaccurate data or information because inadequate time or effort was invested in the research, or deliberate fabrication or distortion of data to support or alter a hypothesis or conclusion are considered blatant breaches of ethics on the part of the researcher, regardless of the rationale or potential benefits considered possible from such action.

Finally, it should be noted that the responsibility for ethical behavior in qualitative research or any research endeavor must ultimately rest with each investigator him or herself. As noted by Fetterman (1982), the researcher must discover appropriate ethical principles and how best to apply them since it has always been difficult to legislate morality.

Being Systematic

Finally, the authors would like to reiterate the theme they have attempted to convey throughout this book. That is, qualitative research is *not* an unstructured, unsystematic, haphazard, or sloppy approach to research. There is structure and there are specific research strategies and data collection procedures involved. However the general approach is flexible, allowing for modifications of the structure and data collection procedures as deemed necessary based on the data being collected. Highly systematic, consistent attention to and analysis of the data as the data are being collected

are needed to guide the qualitative research study. Thus, qualitative research develops and alters its structure as data from the field indicates what is needed. In this way, the specific research questions asked and methods employed are grounded in data from the empirical world.

CONCLUSION

Many researchers believe that qualitative research has a contribution to make to educational inquiry, which has too long been dominated almost exclusively by quantitative research. However, while the pendulum is beginning to swing away from the exclusive use of quantitative research, it should not be allowed, in our opinion, to swing too far toward qualitative research. As Filstead (1979) noted, "the middle ground of blending the assets of both approaches appears optimal" (p. 43).

References

Abrahamson, M. (1983). *Social research methods.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

American Psychological Association (1983). *Publication manual.* Washington, DC: Author.

Angus, L. (1986). Developments in ethnographic research in education: From interpretive to critical ethnography. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 20,* 59–66.

Becker, H. (1970). *Sociological work: Method and substance.* Chicago: Aldine.

Bercovici, S. (1983). *Barriers to normalization.* Baltimore: University Park Press.

Blase, J. J. (1980). *On the meaning of being a teacher: A study of the teacher's perspective.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University.

Blase, J. (1986). A qualitative analyses of sources of teacher stress: Consequences for performance. *American Educational Research Journal, 23*(1), 13–40.

Blatt, B., & Kaplan, F. (1966). *Christmas in purgatory.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Blumer, H. (1980). Comment, Mead and Blumer: The convergent methodological perspectives of social behaviorism and symbolic interaction. *American Sociological Review, 45,* 409–419.

Bogdan, R., & Taylor, S. (1982). *Inside/out: The social meaning of mental retardation.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bogdan, R., Taylor, S., deGrandpre, B., & Haynes, S. (1974). Let them eat programs: Attendants' perspectives and programming on wards in state schools. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 15,* 142–151.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Bolster, A. S. (1983). Toward a more effective model of research on teaching. *Harvard Educational Review, 53*(3), 294–308.

Borman, K., LeCompte, M., & Goetz, J. (1986). Ethnographic and qualitative research design and why it doesn't work. *American Behavioral Scientist, 30,* 42–57.

Brady, M., & Cunningham, J. (1985). Living and learning in segregated environments: An ethnography of normalization outcomes. *ETMR, 20,* 241–252.

Bruyn, S. (1966). *The human perspective in sociology: The methodology of participant observation.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Campbell, D. (1979). "Degree of freedom" and the case study. In T. Cook & C. Reichardt (Eds.), *Qualitative and quantitative methods in evaluation research.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Coles, R. (1971). *Migrants, sharecroppers, mountaineers.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Cronbach, L. (1975). Beyond the two disciplines of scientific psychology. *American Psychologist, 30,* 116–127.

Dalton, M. (1961). *Men who manage.* New York: Wiley.

Denzin, N. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (2nd Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Dobbert, M. (1982). *Ethnographic research.* New York: Praeger.

Douglas, J. D. (1976). *Investigative social research: Individual and team field research.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Drass, K. A. (1980). The analysis of qualitative data: A computer program. *Urban Life, 9*(3), 332–353.

Edgerton, R. (1967). *The cloak of competence: Stigma in the lives of the mentally retarded.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Edgerton, R. (1984). The participant-observer approach to research in mental retardation. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 88,* 498–505.

Edgerton, R., Bollinger, M., & Herr, B. (1984). The cloak of competence: After two decades. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 88,* 345–351.

Edgerton, R. B., & Bercovici, S. (1976). The cloak of competence: Years later. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 80,* 485–497.

Eisner, E. W. (1977). Critique. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 8,* 71–72.

Eisner, E. W. (1981). "On the differences between scientific and artistic approaches to qualitative research." *Educational Researcher, 10*(4), 5–9.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching.* New York: MacMillan.

Erikson, K. (1967). A comment on disguised observation in sociology. *Social Problems, 14,* 366–373.

Fetterman, D. (1982). Ethnography in educational research: The dynamics of diffusion. *Educational Researcher, 11,* 17–22.

Fetterman, D. (1986). Conceptual crossroads: Methods and ethics in ethnographic evaluation. In D. D. Williams (Ed.), *Naturalistic evaluation* (pp. 23–36). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Filstead, W. (1979). Qualitative methods: A needed perspective in evaluation research. In T. Cook & C. Reichardt (Eds.), *Qualitative and quantitative methods in evaluation research.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Firestone, W., & Herriott, R. (1983). The formalization of qualitative research. *Evaluation Review, 7,* 437–466.

Freeman, D. (1983). *Margaret Mead and Samoa.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The interpretation of cultures.* New York: Basic Books.

Gerson, E. M. (1987). Another way of working with text. *Qualitative Sociology, 10*(2), 204–207.

Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New York: Aldine.

Glaser, M. (1972). *The research adventure: Promise and problems of field work.* New York: Random House.

Goetz, J., & LeCompte, M. (1982). Ethnographic research and the problem of data reduction. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 12,* 51–70.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1981). *Effective evaluation.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technologies Journal, 29,* 75–92.

Halpern, E. S. (1983). *Auditing naturalistic inquiries: The development and application of a model.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice.* New York: Tavistock Publications.

Hargreaves, D., Hesler, S., & Mellor, F. (1975). *Deviance in classrooms.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Healy, H. (1985). Personal communication. University of Northern Iowa.

Henry, J. (1960). A cross-cultural outline of education. *Current Anthropology, 1,* 267–305.

Herriott, R., & Firestone, W. (1983). Multisite qualitative policy research: Optimizing description and generalizability. *Educational Researcher, 12,* 14–19.

Heshusius, L. (1981). *Meaning in life as experienced by persons lableled retarded in a group home.* Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Homans, G. (1962). *Sentiments and activities: Essays in social science.* New York: The Free Press.

House, E. R. (1976). Justice in evaluation. In G. V. Glass (Ed.), *Evaluation Studies Annual (no. 1.)* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage (1978).

Humphreys, L. (1975). *Tearoom trade.* Chicago: Aldine.

Jacob, E. (1987). Qualitative research traditions: A review. *Review of Educational Research, 57,* 1–50.

Jacob, E. (1988). Clarifying qualitative research: A focus on traditions. *Educational Researcher, 17*(1), 16–24.

Johnson, J. (1975). *Doing field research.* New York: Free Press.

Katz, J. (1983) A theory of qualitative methodology: The social science system of analytic fieldwork. In R. M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary field research* (pp. 127–148). Boston: Little, Brown.

Kazdin, A. (1977). Assessing the clinical or applied importance of behavior change through social validation. *Behavior Modification, 1,* 427–452.

Kirk, J. & Miller, M. L. (1986). *Reliability and validity in qualitative research.* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Koegel, P., & Edgerton, R. (1984). "Six-hour retarded children" as young adults. In R. Edgerton (Ed.) *Lives in process: Mildly retarded adults in a large city* (pp. 145–172). Washington, DC: American Association of Mental Deficiencies.

Krueger, P. J. (1987). Ethnographic research methodology in music education. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 35*(2), 69–77.

LeCompte, M., & Goetz, J. (1982). Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research. *Review of Educational Research, 52,* 31–60.

Lehne, R. (1978). *The quest for justice: The politics of school finance reform.* New York: Longman, (1982).

Levine, H., & Langness, L. (1985). Everyday cognitions among mildly retarded adults: An ethnographic approach. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 90*(1), 18–26.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1986). But is it rigorous? In D. D. Williams (Ed.), *Naturalistic evaluation* (pp. 78–84). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Lofland, J. (1971). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher, 17*(2), 13–17.

Mead, M. (1928). *Coming of age in Samoa.* New York: Morrow.

Mehan, H., Hertweck, A., & Meihls, J. (1986). *Handicapping the handicapped.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination.* London: Oxford University Press.

Murray, C., Anderson, J., Bersani, H., & Mesaros, R. (1986). Qualitative research methods in special education: Ethnography, microethnography, and ethnology. *Journal of Special Education Technology, 7,* 15–31.

Nelson, T. H. (1980). Replacing the printed word: A complete literary system. In S. H. Lavington (Ed.), *Information Processing, 80* (pp. 1013–1023). New York: North-Holland.

Neumann, K. (1987). Educational research—Problems and examples of controlled understanding through interpretive methods. *International Review of Education, 33,* 159–170.

Ogbu, J. (1981). School ethnography: A multilevel approach. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 12,* 3–29.

Olesen, V., & Whittaker, E. (1968). *The silent dialogue, a study in the social psychology of professional socialization.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation methods.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publication.

Pelto, P., & Pelto, G. (1978). *Anthropological research: The structure or inquiry.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Punch, M. (1986). *The politics and ethics of fieldwork.* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Reichardt, C., & Cook, T. (1979). Beyond qualitative versus quantitative methods. In T. Cook & C. Reichardt (Eds.), *Qualitative and quantitative methods in evaluation research.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Reiss, A. J. (1979). Governmental regulation of scientific enquiry: Some paradoxical consequences, In C. B. Klockars & F. W. O'Connor (Eds.), *Deviance and decency* (pp. 61–95). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Rist, R. (1980). Blitzkrieg ethnography: On the transformation of a method into a movement. *Educational Researcher, 9*(2), 8–10.

Romberg, T. A. (1981). Field-based inquiry and the development of a mathematical methodology for the study of schooling. In T. Popkewitz & B. Tabachnick (Eds.), *The study of schooling.* New York: Praeger.

Rosenhan, D. L. (1973). On being sane in insane places. *Science, 179,* 250–258.

Sagarin, E. (1973). The research setting and the right not to be researched. *Social Problems, 21,* 52–64.

Schwartz, H., & Jacobs, J. (1979). *Qualitative sociology: A method to the madness.* New York: The Free Press.

Scriven, M. (1974). Evaluation perspectives and procedures. In J. Popham (Ed.), *Evaluation in education: Current applications.* (pp. 1–93). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

Simons, H. (1981). Conversation piece: The practice of interviewing in case study research. In C. Adelman (Ed.), *Uttering, muttering: Collecting, using and reporting talk for social and educational research.* London: Grant McIntyre.

Skrtic, T. (1988). The crisis in special education knowledge. In E. L. Meyen & T. M. Skrtic (Eds.), *Exceptional Children and Youth.* Denver: Love.

Smith, J. (1983). Quantitative versus qualitative research: An attempt to clarify the issues. *Educational Researcher, 12,* 6–13.

Smith, J. (1988). The evaluator/researcher as person vs. the person as evaluator/researcher. *Educational Researcher, 17*(2), 18–23.

Smith, J., & Heshusius, L. (1986). Closing down the conversation: The end of the quantitative-qualitative debate among educational inquirers. *Educational Researcher, 28,* 4–12.

Smith, M. L. (1986). The whole is greater: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in evaluation studies. In D. D. Williams (Ed.), *Naturalistic evaluation* (pp. 78–84). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Smith, M. L. (1987). Publishing qualitative research. *American Educational Research Journal, 24*(2), 173–183.

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The enthnographic interview.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Stainback, S., & Stainback, W. (1984). Broadening the research perspective in special education. *Exceptional Children, 50,* 400–409.

Strike, K. (1982). *Educational policy and the just society.* Champaign: University of Illinois.

Taylor, S., & Bogdan, R. (1980). Defending illusion: The institutions struggle for survival. *Human Organization, 39*(3), 209–218.

Taylor, S. & Bogdan, R. (1981). A qualitative approach to the study of community adjustment. In R. Bruininks, C. Meyers, B. Sigford, & K. Lakin (Eds.). *Deinstitutionalization and community adjustment of mentally retarded people.* Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Deficiency.

Taylor, S., & Bogdan, R. (1984). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meanings.* New York: John Wiley.

Thomas, J. (1983). Toward a critical ethnography: A reexamination of the Chicago legacy. *Urban Life, 14,* 477–490.

Tymitz, B., & Wolf, R. (1977). *An introduction to judicial evaluation and natural inquiry.* Washington, DC: Nero and Associates.

VanMaanen, J. (1983). The moral fix: On the ethics of fieldwork. In R. M. Emerson (Ed.) *Contemporary field research.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Walker, R., & Adelman, C. (1972). *Toward a sociography of classrooms.* Final Report, SSRC Grant HR 996/1 "The analysis of classroom behavior"

and HR 1442/1 "The long term observation of classroom events using stop frame and cinematography." London: Center for Science Education, Chelsea College.

Warren, C. A. B. (1974). *Identity and community in the gay world.* New York: Wiley.

Warwick, D. (1975). Social scientists ought to stop lying. *Psychology Today, 8,* 105–106.

Webb, E., Campbell, D., Schwartz, R., & Sechrest, L. (1966). *Unobtrusive measurement.* Chicago: Rand McNally.

Weppner, R. S. (1977). *Street ethnography.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Whyte, W. F. (1982). Interviewing in field research. In R. G. Burgess (Ed.), *Field research: A sourcebook and field manual* (pp. 111–122). London: Allen and Unwin. (Original work published 1960.)

Williams, D. (1986). Naturalistic evaluation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 8,* 87–99.

Wilson, S. (1977). The use of ethnographic techniques in educational research. *Review of Educational Research, 47,* 245–265.

Wolcott, H. (1975). Criteria for an ethnographic approach to research in schools. *Human Organization, 34,* 111–128.

Wolcott, H. (1984). Ethnographers sans ethnography: The evaluation compromise. In D. M. Fetterman (Ed.), *Ethnography in educational evaluation* (pp. 177–210). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Wolf, M. (1978). Social validity: The case for subjective measurement or how applied behavior analysis is finding its heart. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 11,* 203–214.

Yankelovich, N. (1986). "Intermedia: A system for linking multimedia documents." Brown University: IRIS (Institute for Research in Information and Scholarship. Box 1946, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912).

Ziegler, S. (1980). School for life: The experience of Italian immigrants in Canadian schools. *Human Organization, 39*(3), 269–287.

The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

ISBN 0-8403-5020-1

Kendall/Hunt
Publishing Company
Dubuque, Iowa

125